# The Experience of Voice for Asian American Women in Different Social Contexts

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# THE EXPERIENCE OF VOICE FOR ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL CONTEXTS

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Research on women's voice and self-silencing has shown that girls begin to silence themselves during adolescence in response to sociocultural pressures to conform to gender norms and as a way to stay relationally connected with others. While the literature on voice for women has been extensive, it has centered primarily on the experiences of European-American women, which may not be generalizable to other ethnic/racial groups. This study extends existing research by examining voice experiences for Asian American women specifically. Given the multiple minority statuses and social roles that are a part of Asian American women's identities, the current study examined the intersecting influences of gender, race, culture, and power, in the experience of voice and authenticity. Specifically, this study explored voice for these women in different social contexts where issues of gender, race and power tend to be salient. Additionally, the study examined the role of racism-related stress and culture in self-silencing. Finally, associations between voice, support for voice, and psychological wellbeing were assessed.

Findings indicated that levels of voice, as well as levels of perceived support for voice varied by social context, providing evidence for the importance of social climate in voice. In general, both voice and perceived support for voice were higher in settings with minimal power differentials (i.e., with female and Asian peers vs. with authority figures). In two of the social contexts of interest (i.e., non-Asian peers and male authority figures),

racism-related stress was significantly associated with lower levels of voice. Self-construal, which was used as an indicator of cultural tendencies, was also significantly associated with voice; individuals with an independent style had more voice, and those with an interdependent style had less voice. Higher levels of voice were associated with higher perceived support for voice. And ultimately, higher voice was linked with better psychological outcomes. Implications for research, work/school settings, and clinical practice were discussed, as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

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# Chapter 1 (Introduction)

## Problem Statement

A growing body of literature exists on the concept of voice, or one's ability to express one's thoughts and emotions authentically. In particular, this research has focused on the experiences of girls and women. While authentic expression of self is thought to be integral to a woman's psychosocial development and wellbeing, studies have found that starting in the adolescent years, girls seem to silence themselves (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Spira, Grossman, & Wolff-Bensdorf, 2002), becoming increasingly less likely to express their negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, and pain, in their relationships (Brown, 1998). Scholars have argued that when women are silenced or unable to express their thoughts and feelings freely and authentically, they are not heard and valued (Neff & Harter, 2002a). Furthermore, self-silencing have been associated with feelings of disempowerment and/or being in a subordinate position (Neff & Harter, 2002a). "Voicelessness" has also been associated with a variety of detrimental consequences on wellbeing, including depression (Jack, 1991), eating disorders (Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002), lower self esteem (Harter, Waters, Whitesell, & Kastelic, 1998, LePine & Van Dyne, 1998) and other psychological problems (Neff & Harter, 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2002b).

In addition to these personal costs, research has suggested that loss of voice can have a larger systemic impact on work and academic settings (Hune, 1998). In these settings, privileging and valuing the perspectives and realities of some individuals (usually the dominant group) over others can serve to maintain inequitable power structures, placing members of minority groups at a relative disadvantage (Orbe, 1998).

For example, individuals from other cultures have described feeling consistently pressured to adjust their ways of being or behaving to fit in with the mainstream culture—rather than being encouraged to remain authentic, given the implicit message that mainstream culture is the "correct" or standard way of being. Thus, minority group members who voice their thoughts or behave differently from the majority group members may put themselves at risk of social isolation, and reduce their prospects and opportunities for success. Unfortunately, the alternative loss of voice that results from an ongoing experience of feeling unheard, unacknowledged or undervalued has also been likened to a kind of "social death" (Mitra, 2001).

In multicultural settings, cultural clashes in interpersonal interaction (e.g., communication style, behavior, etc.), along with factors such as stereotyping and discrimination, may shape the experiences of minority group members and may ultimately affect how comfortable they feel expressing thoughts, opinions, and points of view (London, Downey, Romero-Canyas, Rattan, & Tyson, 2012; Orbe, 1998; Walker, 2004). When multiple perspectives are not freely expressed and respected, the status quo is maintained and certain groups remain disadvantaged (Hartling, Rosen, Walker, & Jordan, 2004). In other words, when marginalized people are not given voice, accepted views within mainstream culture remain limited, and the practices and behaviors that continue to marginalize particular groups go unchallenged—at great cost to the system or society.

**The Concept of Voice**

The concept of voice has been defined in a variety of ways. Research in workplace and organizational settings describe voice behaviors as "speaking up" usually

with the intent to affect change and improve conditions (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003). Others conceptualize voice as verbal expression that reflects the authentic self (Gilligan, 1993; Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1997; Jack, 1991). In this study, voice and voice behaviors are defined as the degree to which one is able to express thoughts and opinions freely in a way that reflects one's true self (Gilligan, 1993; Harter et al., 1997; Jack, 1991).

**Gender and Voice**

Although, in the current and previous studies, the concept of "women silencing themselves" may capture women's own role and agency in the way they express themselves, research acknowledges that there are other contextual factors, rather than strictly personality or personal factors that contribute to silencing tendencies. In particular, women's tendencies to suppress their thoughts and emotions can be understood as resulting in part from living in a patriarchal and sexist society (Kramarae, 1981; Orbe, 1998). In Western civilizations, including the United States, there has been a long established history of patriarchy in that men have traditionally held power over women (French, 1985). Research on women's development has suggested that voice and silencing occur within a relational context and often are used to maintain relationships (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991; Jack, 2003, Jack & Ali, 2010; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Furthermore, scholars have attempted to understand why adolescence is a particular turning point in girls' experiences of voice—from relative freedom to increasing inhibition (Gilligan, 1993; Taylor et al., 1995). Developmental and gender theories have suggested that during this period of girls' development, gender becomes increasingly salient. Specifically, girls begin to face gender role conflicts as the pressure

to conform to gender norms and expectations for women increase in adolescence (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991). Thus, given the importance of relationships to girls and women, they may silence themselves to conform to stereotypical images of the ideal "good woman" hoping to gain approval and maintain relationships with others in male dominant societies (Jack, 1991). Moreover, prescribed ways of being for men and women (i.e., gender role socialization) tend to restrict acceptable behaviors based on gender. The accepted gender roles tend to reinforce gender stereotypes, which, in turn, often serve to maintain the existing power structure (i.e., supporting male privilege and devaluing women). Thus, in patriarchal societies, men are expected and encouraged to be powerful and assertive; conversely, women are expected to be accommodating and nurturing (Jack, 1991; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; O'Neil & Egan, 1993; O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011; Rudman & Glick 2001). Women who exhibit assertiveness and other "masculine" characteristics (e.g., assertiveness, competitiveness, confidence, "tough-mindedness ") are often seen as abnormal and/or they may be punished (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; O'Neil & Egan, 1993; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999). Thus, the pressure to self-silence and conform to traditional gender stereotypes is significant, given the negative consequences for defying these gendered expectations.

The pressure to conform to gender norms can also be significant in some Asian cultures since many Asian cultures are patriarchal and influenced by Confucianism—an ethical and philosophical system which emphasizes respect for hierarchy and adherence to behaviors that maintain harmony and structure (Tien & Olson, 2003). Confucianism's "Three Obediences," for example, are a set of principles written specifically for women

and state that a woman should (a) obey her father as a daughter, (b) obey her husband as a wife, and (c) obey her sons as a widow. Thus, the role of women in such a society is clearly defined and subordinate to men. In addition, in Confucianism, a woman's role is described in the four attributes of women: (a) virtue (i.e., obedient and subservient to the men in her life), (b) speech (i.e., agreeable, pleasant), (c) demeanor (i.e., docile, quiet, passive), and (d) work (i.e., skilled in all household tasks, serving in-laws, etc.) (Tien & Olson, 2003).

**Asian American Women and Voice**

While a number of researchers (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991) have studied "voice," their studies have been largely based on White, middle-class women. The few studies of minority groups have indicated that marginalized girls sometimes resist being silenced (Taylor et al., 1995; Way, 1995). These studies, however, have focused primarily on African American and Latina girls, and have not included Asian Americans. The meager number of studies that have explicitly focused on Asian Americans and voice are about the experiences of men (Sue, Ino, & Sue, 1983; Sue, Zane, & Sue, 1985; Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991). Although Pailliotet's (1997) study involved the experiences of one Asian female pre-service teacher, it limited its scope to the educational context of the teacher, and did not examine other settings that are likely to influence voice.

Being "invisible" is a problem that all minority groups experience but for minority women it can be a particularly difficult problem as they can be oppressed and silenced for their gender and their race or ethnicity (Hune, 1998; Hune, 2006; Ken, 2010; Loo & Ho, 2006; Turner, 2002; Turner, 1997a; Turner, 1997b). Thus, it is important to

consider the intersections of race, gender and culture when examining Asian American women's experiences of voice (Liu, Tsong, & Hayashino, 2007; Suzuki, Ahluwalia, & Alimchandani, 2013). For this latter population, experiences of being silenced may also be exacerbated by stereotypes specific to Asian American women. Cultural mismatches in communication styles may further contribute to the silencing of Asian American women, particularly in settings where direct and explicit communication is assumed and expected. For example, when Asians appear reticent due to the cultural value of listening over speaking, others may interpret their behavior pejoratively as unassertiveness. Thus, cultural biases can create misinterpretations and misunderstandings of behaviors and serve to reinforce common stereotypes of Asian American women as passive and quiet. Furthermore, according to Van Dyne et al. (2003), the tendency for others to misinterpret the motives of silence can result in consequences that are often inappropriate to the situation.

For example, Pailliotet's (1997) case study demonstrates how a cultural mismatch in communication styles can result in significant negative consequences for an Asian American woman. In this study, the relative reticence of an Asian American pre-service teacher, "Vivian," was seen as a negative personal characteristic rather than as a cultural difference. Vivian stated that in her culture, listening and not speaking up was a sign of respect. The faculty and her supervisors, however, misinterpreted her silence as a sign of disinterest and lack of understanding and, as a result, evaluated her negatively. Interestingly, Vivian reported that she was able to communicate effectively with teachers who were also "quiet" and who "took time to listen" but had difficulty with supervisors and evaluators, including a professor who failed her based on one classroom observation.

Vivian's significantly contrasting experiences of being heard (or not heard) by different people suggest that voice may be partly dependent on the social context and the power differences within the social context.

**Culture and communication style.** Some scholars have conceptualized the reticence of Asian Americans as a communication style that is culturally based (Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999). According to Singelis and Brown (1995), culture is closely tied to communication style. In their model, self-construal (defined in this study as the degree to which an individual is group-oriented vs. individually oriented) tends to be determined by culture and is related to communication style. In other words, one's cultural background and socialization influences one's self-construal, which, in turn, influences behavior (e.g., communication style). Thus, self-construal may be one way of examining the broad construct of "culture," particularly as it relates to communication style.

Hall (1976) identified two styles of communication: high context and low context. High context communication–-often associated with collectivistic cultures (e.g., some Asian cultures)—is characterized by a nonverbal and indirect style (Hall, 1976). In addition, high context communication behaviors are informed by context (e.g., social roles, hierarchies, etc.) and cultural expectations within those contexts. For example, Chinese children are often expected to be obedient and to *ting hua* (literally "listen to words") when they are with parents, teachers or an older person (Gao, 1998). In these situations, they are expected to listen to the older person but not voice their own thoughts (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). With peers, the children are freer to speak their minds. These culturally expected behaviors exist to maintain harmony and social structure.

Similarly, by speaking in a more indirect way (e.g., less verbally explicit, communication based on shared cultural understanding or inferences) a person with a high context style may be more likely to avoid conflict with others (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987). Thus, this style of communication may emphasize the importance of listening over speaking. In contrast, low context communication is characterized by a more direct and explicit style that tends to be associated with individualistic societies, such as the U.S. (Hall, 1976).

Due to these differences in communication style, it stands to reason that when living and working in a setting where direct and explicit communication is valued and expected, high context individuals may be labeled as "quiet." This cultural misunderstanding may further reinforce broader stereotypical beliefs that Asians and Asian Americans are "unassertive," "passive," and "weak."

**Stereotypes and racial discrimination.** Stereotypes and racial discrimination continue to be prevalent in contemporary society at great cost to people of color and society at large. Racial discrimination has been associated with depression, decreased self-esteem, and other negative psychological outcomes (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Harrell, 2000; Liang, Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2007; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). The damaging effects of racial discrimination can be cumulative and have been described as a form of trauma that may result in complex PTSD (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Carter, 2007; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006; Lowe, Okubo, & Reilly, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles, 1998).

Although it has been argued that racial incidents have decreased over time and that society has become increasingly intolerant of overt racial discrimination, some researchers have argued that contemporary racism exists in a more subtle and covert form

(Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Sue, 2005; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). Unfortunately, covert racism may be especially damaging because enables perpetrators to deny such incidents, and leaves recipients wondering how to interpret racial incidents. More specifically, subtle forms of discrimination, or "microaggressions," can do significant damage to recipients' wellbeing because these incidents tend to foster self-doubt and a questioning of one's own reality (which in and of itself can have negative psychological consequences). Because microaggressions are subtle and at times invisible, recipients may also lack social support to help them deal with an incident, since others typically deny or downplay microaggressions. Thus, in seeking support for these subtle insults, individuals may be re-traumatized when their experiences are dismissed, especially when the dismissal is enacted by loved ones or other trusted individuals (Lowe et al., 2012). The reality of the person experiencing the microaggressions may be denied and his or her negative emotions may be invalidated—"silencing" experiences that lie at the heart of "loss of voice." Furthermore, chronic or repeated microaggressions within relationships may result in "racial battle fatigue," the effects of which can foster social withdrawal and the tendency to keep quiet (Smith et al., 2007). Thus, racial microaggressions and other forms of discrimination may communicate hostility and may contribute to a "chilly climate" that may inhibit free expression.

Research suggests that stereotypes, covert racism and microaggressions may play a particular role in experience of voice among Asian Americans. Perhaps one of the most common stereotypes of Asian Americans is that they are "quiet" and make no waves (Takaki, 1998). This perception, along with possible cultural misunderstandings, may

contribute to the silencing of Asian American women. Stereotypes such as "submissiveness" and "quietness" can make it difficult for Asian American women to claim visibility. Because such stereotypes limit the range of behaviors that are "acceptable" for these women, those who do assert themselves may risk being perceived in a negative light and/or face sanctions (Berdahl & Min, 2012). Furthermore, when Asian American women defy expectations of passivity, they may be seen as *overly* assertive (in comparison to Asian "norms") and may be further stereotyped (and dismissed) as the overly aggressive "dragon lady" (Hune, 1998). Ultimately, these diametrically opposed stereotypical views of Asian American women (i.e., as submissive and aggressive) may serve to silence them.

Given, however, that there is great diversity within the Asian American population, and cultural values and behaviors may differ significantly between ethnic and even regional Asian groups, factors other than communication style and culture may be at play in determining the experience of voice among Asian American women. One possible factor that was examined in this study is the impact of power differentials on the experience and expression of voice.

**Power and voice.** Research from business and studies in the workplace have suggested that silence or lack of voice may be related to power differences (Islam & Zyphur, 2003) as well as to consequences of "speaking up" in certain settings for those with less power (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Islam & Zyphur, 2003; Van Dyne et al., 2003). Thus, for example, an employee may not express disagreement with his or her supervisor for fear of being fired or passed over for a promotion. Alternatively, an already socially isolated individual may acquiesce to others to avoid being further

marginalized. The influence of hierarchy and power on voice behaviors may be particularly relevant to the experiences of women and minorities who have traditionally held less power in relation to men and to majority group members.

Furthermore, the research on communication styles suggests that those from high context cultures may be especially attuned to hierarchical relationships and, thus, may be the most likely to defer to authority figures and others perceived as holding power (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Hall, 1976; Kim, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999). An Asian American woman who was raised to respect elders and authority figures, for example, may be reluctant to speak up in the presence of such people, but may speak more freely with peers.

Power has been defined as "an individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments" (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, p. 265). Thus, those in power, compared to their less powerful counterparts, by definition hold greater freedom and control over resources and tend to be a better "fit" with their environments--environments that do not hinder, but privilege the perspectives and behaviors of those in power (Keltner, et al., 2003). For these reasons, those in power may be more likely to engage in voice behaviors since the environment in which they hold authority supports their voice (i.e., others are likely to respond in agreement or to try to fulfill the wishes of those in power). Conversely, those with less power may be less likely to voice their perspectives because of the potential negative consequences, particularly if their views differ from the majority; thus, there is less support for voice behaviors. Furthermore, the threat and resulting fear of isolation may also limit levels of voice (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). For women and minorities,

the threat of possible alienation may be particularly powerful, given their already marginalized status. Speaking up may be thus seen as dangerous and silence may be a survival strategy (Morrison & Milliken, 2003).

Together, the combination of interpersonal processes and power dynamics described above may result in environments that inhibit Asian American women from expressing themselves and from being heard, even when they express themselves.

**Support for Voice**

On the other hand, scholars have noted that when individuals have support for voice (i.e., interpersonal relationships or social contexts that validate, rather than deny, their experiences), they are empowered to express emotions and perspectives authentically (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004, Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Harter, 1997; Harter, 2002; Harter et al., 1998; Jack, 1991; Jordan, 2004). Indeed, a number of studies have provided empirical evidence that support for voice is associated with higher levels of voice and authenticity (Harter, 1996; Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996; Harter et al., 1998; Mitra, 2004; Spira et al., 2002).

For women of color and other marginalized populations, lack of support for voice, and the fear and threat of alienation may prevent them from expressing opposing viewpoints, keeping them in a state of relative silence (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). Additionally, the experiences of women of color are often invalidated; this chronic lack of support and "unresponsiveness" from others can foster minority women's inauthenticity and denial of their own perspectives (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004).

In contrast, the literature discussed in this section provides evidence that support for voice or relationships and social contexts that encourage voice may play a critical role in creating spaces where Asian American women may feel safe and empowered to speak.

**The Present Study**

This study examined the experiences of voice in the lives of Asian American women. Because voice has been studied as a relatively global construct with little consideration for how it might vary across different social contexts (Harter et al., 1998), this study also examined the different contexts that enabled or limited voice for Asian American women; specifically, contexts where race, gender and power are salient were selected. This study also examined how voice was affected by racism-related stress, culture and communication style, gender, and power. The relationship between voice and psychological wellbeing and self-esteem as well as the role of support was also examined. More specifically, the present study targeted the following research questions:

**1. What is the relationship between level of voice and psychological wellbeing?**

H1a: Higher levels of voice will be correlated with higher self-esteem and with lower levels of psychological distress.

H1b: Lower levels of voice will be correlated with lower self-esteem and higher levels of psychological distress.

**2. What is the relationship between culture/self-construal and voice?**

H2a: Higher independent self-construal will be associated with higher levels of voice.

H2b: Higher interdependent self-construal will be associated with lower levels of voice.

**3. Does level of voice differ across different social contexts? (i.e., power, race and gender salient environments)?**

H3a: It is predicted that voice will vary, depending on the social context.

H3b: It is predicted that higher levels of voice will occur in contexts involving peers, Asians, and females.

H3c: Lower levels of voice are predicted to occur in contexts involving authority (i.e., power differential), non-Asians, and males.

**4. Does perceived support for voice differ across different social contexts? (i.e., power, race and gender salient environments)?**

H4a: It is predicted that perceived support for voice will vary, depending on the social context.

H4b: It is predicted that perceived support for voice will be higher in contexts involving peers, Asians, and females.

H4c: Lower levels of perceived support for voice are predicted to occur in contexts involving authority (i.e., power differential), non-Asians, and males.

**5. Is the experience of racism-related stress associated with voice behaviors?**

H5a: Higher levels of racism-related stress will be associated with lower levels of voice. Conversely, lower levels of racism-related stress will be associated with higher levels of voice.

**6. Is there a relationship between level of voice and support for voice?**

H6a: Within each social context, perceived support for voice will be positively correlated with level of voice (i.e., higher levels of support will be correlated with higher levels of voice while lower levels of support would be correlated with lower voice).

While there is much to be learned about experiences of voice for Asian American women, this preliminary examination is designed to clarify ways in which the variables of interest in this study contribute to levels of voice for this population and help to inform further research. Through an enhanced understanding of voice, we can begin to dismantle the structures that serve to silence Asian American women and contribute to the valuing of Asian American women's experiences and perspectives in this society. In addition, the insights gained from this study may also help to elucidate the experiences of other oppressed groups and bring to awareness the behaviors and practices that serve to silence them and to perpetuate inequality.

## Chapter 2 (Review of the Literature)

The idea of an Asian American woman often conjures up specific images in U.S. culture (Tien, 2000). They are often portrayed in the media as meek, submissive, quiet and eager to please (Green & Kim, 2005; Suzuki et al., 2013). They are viewed frequently as studious, hardworking, obedient ---almost drone-like, making no waves (Green & Kim, 2005; Suzuki et al., 2013;). But how accurate are these views of Asian American women? Are there times when these women do not fit these stereotypical roles? This study focuses on the issue of voice for Asian American women. Specifically, the study will seek to elucidate which contexts are conducive or not conducive to voice. The study will also examine different factors that may influence level of voice such as, culturally influenced communication style and issues related to gender, race and power. Additionally, the study will focus on the relationship between voice and wellbeing and the relationship between voice and interpersonal factors (i.e., support for voice).

### Defining Voice

Although the concept of voice has been researched extensively, it has been defined in a number of ways. Some researchers in business and workplace settings have described voice as a sort of constructive criticism with the intent to improve conditions (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). In this definition, voice is different from complaining which does not offer solutions. It is also not considered an "affiliative behavior" since challenging others even constructively can be seen as upsetting interpersonal relationships. Thus, voice, defined in this way is seen as more utilitarian and goal-oriented in nature; voice is used to communicate information that will lead to better outcomes in work, but not necessarily in relationships.

In contrast, literature in women's studies, specifically from the relational-cultural models, defines voice as inherently interpersonal. In women's studies, the loss of voice has also been referred to as "self-silencing," "false self," and "inauthentic relationships" (Theran, 2010). In all of these terms, the primacy of relationship or interaction with others is implied. According to these relational models, voice and silencing occur within a relational context and often are used to maintain relationships (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991; Jack, 2003, Jack and Ali, 2010; Taylor et al., 1995). Similarly, studies in communications, particularly those in cross-cultural communication, describe voice behaviors as related to interpersonal dynamics, often based on one's social status or role (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus, a person from a culture that values hierarchy may communicate differently with an elder or person of authority when compared to a peer (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999). In this study, the concept of voice derives from these feminist concepts; specifically, voice will be defined as verbal behaviors that reflect one's true thoughts, feelings and experiences, and that are given freely and reflect one's authentic self.

**Research on Women and Voice**

These issues pertaining to women's voice have been studied extensively. Perhaps the most well known writings on women's voice are from Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1993). According to Gilligan, girls begin to lose their voices as they enter into adolescence (Gilligan, 1993; Taylor et al., 1995). During this period of time in girls' development, gender becomes more salient and girls in a patriarchal society begin to experience gender role conflicts as they absorb the norms and expectations for women

(Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991). Other researchers, however, believe that the gender role socialization begins much earlier during infancy and that the socialization of girls results in an increased vulnerability to self-silencing pressures in their social and cultural setting, which becomes more intense during adolescence (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002). Furthermore, the apparent resilience that pre-adolescent girls display against silencing may be due to the younger girls being more sheltered from the gender role constraints (Spinazzola et al., 2002). As the girls move toward adolescence, this protection from societal pressures decreases and, as they grow older, there is increasing pressure for them to conform to gender role norms (Spinazzola et al., 2002).

For example, because of the importance of relationships for women and girls (Gilligan, 1993; Jordan, 2010; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004), they may strive to be the ideal "good woman" in order to gain approval and maintain relationships with others in a male dominant society (Jack, 1991). Thus, adolescent girls may find themselves having to choose between speaking up (i.e., remaining authentic to themselves) and losing relationships with others, or internalizing the feminine ideals and silencing themselves in order to maintain connection with others (Gilligan, 1993; Jack & Ali, 2010; Taylor et al., 1995). Jack (1991) described this conflict as tension between the "I" and the "Over-Eye" (i.e., the judgmental voice that constantly condemns a women's authentic voice, particularly if it strays from cultural ideals of the "good woman"). This "relationship crisis" (Gilligan, 1993) often results in a loss of self (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991) that can eventually lead to depression (Jack, 1991; 2003; 2011).

Jack (1991) furthered Gilligan's ideas by developing a model of women's depression where "loss of voice" is central. Based on a longitudinal study on depressed women, Jack (1991, 2003) found that self-silencing was associated with depression in women. The Silencing the Self model (Jack, 1991) integrates parts of attachment, cognitive and relational theories (Jack, 2011). Furthermore, Jack's (1991) development of The Silencing the Self Scale, which measures loss of voice through endorsements of self-silencing beliefs that are consistent with female gender ideals in this culture and with Gilligan's theories on women's voice, enabled researchers to begin to study the concept of voice quantitatively. One limitation of this work, however, is that it focused primarily on the relationship between self-silencing and depression, and not many other correlates of voice (Spinazzola et al., 2002). Additionally, since the instrument was developed using data from depressed women, it may have limited validity for different populations (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Lutz-Zois, Dixon, Smidt, Goodnight, Gordon, & Ridings, 2013; Remen, Chambless, & Rodebaugh, 2002).

In their research on women's voice, Jack and Dill (1992) identified four cognitive schemas that women used to make and maintain relationships with others. These cognitive schemas manifested behaviorally as self-silencing (Jack & Ali, 2010). The schemas, which are also subscales of their Silencing the Self Scale, include: (a) Externalized self-perception (i.e., self-judgment by external standards based on culture and gender); (b) Care as self-sacrifice (i.e., the degree in which one puts others' needs before oneself); (c) Silencing the self (i.e., silencing in order to secure relationships, avoid conflict, loss and retaliation); and (d) The Divided self (i.e., the degree in which a

person feels the inner division between outer "false" self and the inner (authentic) self resulting from self-silencing) (Jack & Ali, 2010).

**Gender differences in self-silencing**. Despite compelling theories on the saliency of the loss of voice concept in women's experiences, there have been some inconsistencies in the research (Harter et al., 1998; Jack & Ali, 2010; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Way, 1995). For example, a number of studies have shown little or no difference between men and women in self-silencing (Cowan, Bommersbach, & Curtis, 1995; Harter et al., 1998; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). Other studies suggest that men may silence themselves more than women (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Gratch, Bassett, & Attra, 1995; Ussher & Perz, 2010). These inconsistent results have led to much speculation about the reasons behind the sex differences in self-silencing (Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Harter et al., 1998; Ussher & Perz, 2010).

**Gender role orientation.** These inconsistent findings may be explained by gender role orientation (Cramer, Gallant, & Langlois, 2005; Harter et. al., 1998; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Ussher & Perz, 2010). That is, gender differences in self-silencing may be due more to the degree to which a person conforms to traditionally masculine or feminine roles, than to a person's biological sex alone.

In a study on high school students, Harter et al. (1997) found no gender differences in loss of voice; however, they did find that gender role orientation predicted self-silencing. Harter et al., (1997) found that girls with a higher feminine orientation had lower voice scores with teachers and classmates when compared to androgynous girls; upon further examination of the data, the researchers (Harter et al., 1997) found the

feminine girls had particularly lower levels of voice with male classmates compared with female classmates. Additionally, the researchers (Harter, et al., 1997) found that boys with higher masculine orientation had higher levels of voice with male classmates compared to androgynous boys. Interestingly, the androgynous boys scored higher in level of voice with close friends than the more masculine boys (Harter et al., 1997), suggesting that having certain "feminine traits" may allow males to be more comfortable expressing themselves in more intimate relationships.

Smolak and Munstertieger (2002), in their evaluation of the construct validity of two voice measures, also examined the differences in voice between men and women as well as the relationship between voice and gender role orientation. In their study, Smolak and Munstertieger (2002) used both The Silencing the Self Scale (Jack, 1991) and a voice measure that assessed voice in different social contexts (Harter et al., 1998). When comparing men and women's voice scores on the two measures, results were mixed (i.e., did not clearly indicate that women or men had higher/lower voices); however, the researchers found that, in general, having a higher masculine gender orientation was associated with higher levels of voice for both men and women (Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002).

In contrast to researchers who found that male gender role orientation was associated with higher voice and female gender orientation with lower voice (Cramer et al., 2005; Harter et al 1998; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002), Theran (2009) found that both feminine and masculine orientations made independent contributions to level of voice with authority figures (i.e., both were associated with higher levels of voice). This finding suggests that having both positive masculine and feminine traits may be

conducive to higher levels of voice with authority figures (Theran, 2009). Results for voice in the peer context in Theran's study (2009) were more consistent with previous research in that higher voice scores were associated with male gender orientation. Such results may be due to additional factors, such as the ethnic and economic characteristics of the population, given that Theran's (2009) study population was more diverse in these respects compared to previous studies on voice. Moreover, Theran's study (2009) used a voice survey that measured voice in different social contexts (Harter et al., 1998), which may tap into yet another aspect of voice—context. That is, voice may vary by context.

**Construct of voice for men and for women.** These inconsistencies in the results between women and men may also suggest that the construct of voice and silencing may have different meanings and consequences for males and females (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Remen, Chambless, & Rodebaugh, 2002; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). In their evaluation of the construct validity between the Silencing the Self Scale (Jack, 1991) and the Saying What I Think Scale (Harter et al., 1998), Smolak and Munstertieger (2002) found that both scales were at best moderately inter-correlated; however, when they examined the scales separately by gender, the correlational patterns suggested that the construct of voice in both measures may apply more to women than to men (i.e., women's scores on both scales were more correlated than men's scores). The fact that the measures were only moderately correlated also suggests that the instruments may be measuring different aspects of voice and that self-silencing may have multiple etiologies.

Findings from a study by Lutz-Zois et al. (2013) also suggest that the construct of voice may differ for men and women. In their study, Lutz-Zois and colleagues (2013)

found that while overall the subscales of the Silencing the Self Scale were associated with negative emotions and relational styles (e.g., anxious attachment, rejection sensitivity, etc.) for both men and women, the Care as Self-sacrifice was negatively correlated with depression in men only. Interestingly, this subscale was the only one that was correlated with positive emotional and relational outcomes. In contrast, women who scored high in the Care as Self-Sacrifice subscale were more likely to have an anxious attachment style (Lutz-Zois et al., 2013). Furthermore, Neff and Harter's (2002b) study found that men who suppressed their needs in a romantic relationship were more likely to do so out of genuine caring while women were more likely to subordinate their needs to avoid possible negative consequences. Similarly, Duarte and Thompson (1999) found that for women, the Care as Self-Sacrifice subscale was correlated with the Divided Self subscale, suggesting that women who endorsed beliefs that sacrificing one's own needs for others is a part of caring for others may experience more conflict between silencing themselves and being authentic (i.e., having a "divided self"). For men, there was no correlation between the two subscales. These findings are also possible indications that the motivations and consequences of self-silencing may be different for men and women. Researchers have speculated that perhaps cultural imperatives for women to put others' needs before themselves (Gilligan, 1993) may result in different emotional consequences for men and women (Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Jack & Ali, 2010; Lutz-Zois et al., 2013; Smolak, 2010; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). For example, the constant pressure for women to ignore one's own needs to care for others may result in more negative emotional experiences (e.g., anger, resentment, depression); men, on the other hand, who may not have the same cultural mandate, may reap the benefits of caring for others (e.g.,

having close, positive social interactions which may help buffer against depression) with fewer adverse psychological consequences (Lutz-Zois, et al., 2013).

Thus, based on the literature on self-silencing, it appears that while both men and women may silence themselves to some extent, they may do so for different reasons (Cramer et al., 2005; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Gratch et al., 1995; Jack & Ali, 2010; Neff & Harter, 2002b; Smolak, 2010; Ussher & Perz, 2010). Given the inconsistencies in the literature, caution should be used when comparing males and females in level of voice since it appears that the processes and consequences of self-silencing may be different for men and for women (Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). These differences may be due, in part, to the way in which women and men are socialized in this culture (Cramer et al., 2005; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991; Smolak, 2010; Ussher & Perz, 2010).

**The role of gender socialization in voice behaviors.** While the idea the that men may self-silence just as much or more than women appears to go against the theories on women's voice and silencing (i.e., women have less voice than men), there may be other reasons why men also silence themselves. Although men are socialized in this culture to be confident, independent and assertive, they may also be prevented from fully expressing their true experiences because of societal expectations for men (Jack & Ali, 2010). For example, men may hide certain feelings that may be considered "weak" or "unmanly," such as fear or sadness (Cramer et al., 2005; Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Smolak, 2010; Ussher & Perz, 2010). Remen et al., (2002) also reported that men, like women, might silence themselves in order to conform to societal gender norms. In their study (Remen et al., 2002), they found that self-silencing in men, but not in women, was

associated with an avoidant attachment style, which is consistent with stereotypical male behavior (e.g., "strong but silent," avoiding emotional intimacy, etc.). Thus, in contrast to women who may silence themselves in order to maintain relationships and connections, men may suppress self-expression as a way to avoid intimacy and conditions in relationships that limit autonomy and independence (Remen et al., 2002). Similarly, Lutz-Zois et al. (2013) found that women scored higher than men in the Externalized Self-Perception subscale of the Silencing the Self scale, suggesting than women's self-concepts may be more "other oriented" than men (Lutz-Zois et al., 2013; Remen et al., 2002). Furthermore, Ussher & Perz (2010) also found that women in their study appeared to be more aware of external judgments and demonstrated self-policing associated with idealized feminine traits (e.g., caring and nurturing). These results appear to be consistent with literature in women's development (Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991; Jordan, 2010).

Due to gender role socialization, men and women may also rate the items on the Silencing the Self scale differently, leading to misleading results (Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). For example, women may have a higher threshold for what they consider as self-sacrificing since they have been socialized and are expected to care for and nurture others. Thus, women may appear to silence themselves to a lesser degree when compared to men, based on self-report measures. Others have also suggested that since men are socialized to suppress their feelings (Duarte & Thompson, 2002), they may not have the language to fully express or acknowledge their emotions, which may manifest as "self-silencing" (Gratch et al., 1995). Women, on the other hand, may be aware of their feelings but may actively suppress them for the sake of the relationship or

to protect themselves in situations where they feel powerless (Gilligan, 1993; Gratch et al., 1995; Jack, 1991)

Men and women may also silence themselves in an effort to manage power in their relationships, although the motivations and processes may be different depending on sex. For example, men are socialized and expected to be powerful and assertive in this culture (French, 1985); as a consequence, they may conceal information about themselves as a way to maintain power, control, and autonomy in the relationship (Cramer & Toms, 2003; Jack & Ali, 2010; Page, Stevens, & Galvin, 1996; Remen et al., 2002). In contrast, women are expected to be accommodating and nurturing (Jack, 1991; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; O'Neil & Egan, 1993; O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011; Rudman & Glick 2001) and thus, may silence themselves in order to maintain relational connections and/or as a result of being in a powerless position (Gilligan, 1993; Gratch et al., 1995; Jack, 1991).

These issues and discrepancies in the literature on voice imply that level of voice may be influenced by many factors and that the motivation and process of self-silencing is multifaceted.

**The Challenges and Complexity of Voice and Self-Silencing**

Without a doubt, the construct of voice is multidimensional and complex and factors other than gender issues are likely to play a role in voice behaviors (Spinazzola et al., 2002; Van Dyne et al., 2003). From previous research, it is clear that the study of voice itself is challenging in a number of ways, due to the very nature of voice and silencing (Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Spinazzola et al., 2002). For example, some researchers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor et al., 1995) have found it challenging to

access the experience of girls who viewed the researchers with mistrust and suppressed their thoughts and feelings as a result. Another challenging aspect of studying voice is the issue of measuring voice. To date, the Silencing the Self Scale (Jack, 1991) appears to be the most commonly used measure for voice and self-silencing. However, the instrument was developed using data mainly from White, depressed women (Carr, Gilroy & Sherman, 1996; Jack, 1991). Although, Jack and Dill (1992) later further examined the psychometric properties of the Silencing the Self Scale, it was again based mostly on a White female population. For this reason, the measure may have limited validity for men, nonclinical populations, and other ethnic groups (Carr et al., 1996; Spinazzola et al., 2002).

Nonetheless the schemas derived from the Silencing the Self model do illustrate some of the different aspects of self-silencing (e.g., self-silencing may be intrapsychic as well as behaviorally manifested within a relationship) and suggest that the process of self-silencing is complex and multidimensional (Spinazzola et al., 2002). However, because the measure is based specifically on a model for women's depression it may have limited value for exploring other factors that may affect voice (Spinazzola et al., 2002). For example, Ussher and Perz (2010) found in their mixed design study, that self-silencing does not always result in depression in men and women who are caring for a loved one with cancer. In interviewing their participants, it appeared that being in a position where self-sacrifice (i.e., cancer patient's needs were a priority over the carer's needs) is socially sanctioned and valued may explain why this aspect of self-silencing was not associated with depression (Ussher & Perz, 2010). Additionally, self-silencing in these caretaking situations may not be primarily motivated by the need to maintain

relationships (Ussher & Perz, 2010), which does not fit Jack's (1991) model of self-silencing. Furthermore, in a study on the moderating role of race in the relationship between self-silencing and depression in women, Carr et al. (1996) found that the relationship between depression and self-silencing was true only for Caucasian women. This result suggests that there may be sociocultural factors influencing level of voice. Self-silencing, for example, may be a culturally appropriate response that is congruent to ones' self-concept (Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Singelis & Brown, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1999) and may not necessarily have negative consequences (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007; Carr et al., 1996; Mauss & Butler, 2010; Soto, Perez, Kim, Lee, & Minnick, 2011; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998).

Other research has revealed a variety of factors that may affect voice and self-silencing including the experience of oppression, inequality and other threats to self and relationships (Jack & Ali, 2010; Taylor et al., 1995). Researchers examining voice behaviors have linked voice and silencing to gender inequality (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Hurst & Beesley, 2013; Jack, 1991; Kramarae, 1981; London et al., 2012; Swim, Eyssell, Murdoch, & Ferguson, 2010), racial discrimination (Hune, 1998; Hune, 2006; Orbe, 1998; Smith et al., 2007; Turner, 1997a; Turner, 1997b) and social status/power (Anderson & Bordahl, 2002; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Hall, 1976; Islam & Zyphur, 2005; Keltner et al., 2003; Kim, 2002; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Ting-Toomey, 1999). These variables all suggest that voice occurs in the context of a social interaction; thus, in order to more fully examine how these issues affect voice, it would be important to consider social context.

**Voice in Different Social Contexts**

Previous studies on women's voice and silencing have tended to look at level of voice as a fairly stable characteristic of an individual rather than something that is more fluid and contextually based (Harter et. al., 1998; Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Robinson, Lopez, Ramos, & Nartova-Bochaver, 2012; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Theran, 2009). For example, it is assumed that someone who is considered to be assertive would be outspoken across settings, while someone who is considered more submissive is expected to be less openly expressive about their thoughts and feelings. However, it is also a widely held belief that people do behave differently, depending on the social context and relationships with others (Neff & Harter, 2003; Sheldon et al., 1997). For example, people may not express everything that is on their minds in the work setting, but may feel more at liberty to voice their opinions amongst friends.

Some studies have begun to examine empirically the variability of voice in different contexts and have found that individuals do vary in voice behaviors depending on their position and/or the social context in which they are embedded (Harter et al., 1998; Neff & Harter 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2003; Robinson et al., 2012; Sheldon et al., 1997).

Harter et al. (1998) found that level of voice varied by context for both males and females; specifically, for the study sample as a whole, voice was highest with close friends and same sex classmates and lower with parents, teachers and classmates of the opposite sex. Furthermore, certain factors may also influence the contexts in which people feel more able to voice their perspectives. For example, when examining the

relationship between gender orientation and voice, Harter and colleagues (1998) found that high school girls who were high in feminine orientation exhibited less voice in the public setting (e.g., teachers, male classmates) compared to androgynous girls. In the private setting (e.g., close friends, parents), there were no differences in level of voice between feminine girls and androgynous girls. Similarly, in this study (Harter et al., 1998), gender orientation seemed to be influential in determining the contexts conducive to voice for males (i.e., masculine boys had significantly higher levels of voice with male classmates than androgynous boys, but conversely, they had significantly lower levels of voice with close friends compared to androgynous boys). Theran's study (2011) also showed that authenticity varied depending on the relationship context. In addition, Theran (2011) conducted a factor analysis to determine whether authenticity varied across relationships; the results supported a 2-factor solution: authenticity with parents (i.e., mothers and fathers) and authenticity with peers (i.e., classmates and close friends). These results not only provide evidence that the level of voice may vary across settings but also seem to suggest that level of voice may change based on power and relationship status (i.e., parents vs. peers), which is consistent with some of the research examining voice and power (Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff & Harter, 2002a; Edmondson, 2003; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003).

Neff and Harter's research (2003) also supports the idea that individuals varied their relationship style across different relationships. In their study, the researchers identified three types of relationships styles: (a) Self-focused autonomy; (b) Mutuality and (c) Other-focused connection (Neff & Harter, 2003). These relationship styles appear to correspond to the self-concepts of independence (Self-focused autonomy) and

interdependence (Other-focused connection) with the addition of Mutuality, which was described as a more egalitarian style that fell in the middle of independence and interdependence (Neff & Harter, 2003). It was found that the type of relationship style used depended on the relationship and was related to the perception of power within the relationship (Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff & Harter, 2002a). Additionally, the relationship style used was found to be related to levels of authenticity: those endorsing the Other-Focused Connection style were more likely to hide their true selves in the relationship while those using the Self-Focused Autonomy style were more likely to express themselves authentically (Neff & Harter 2002a).

The idea that voice would be dependent, at least in part, on social context is also consistent with the literature in business studies where sensitivity to status and power often influences whether an employee would speak up (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Edmondson, 2003; Islam & Zyphur, 2005; Keltner et al., 2003). Moreover, studies on cultural differences in self-concept and behavior have also pointed to the context-dependent nature of authentic self-expression (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Kim, 2002; Singelis & Brown, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1999). For example, researchers have suggested that those with a more collectivistic orientation may be more sensitive to status and have the tendency to change their behaviors in order to fit the social context (Gudykunst, 2001; Kim, 2002; Singelis & Brown, 1995). Other researchers have suggested that the overall climate or culture of a setting may or may not encourage voice. For example, Edmondson (2003), found that the team leaders in multidisciplinary medical teams were key to creating a climate where speaking up was either encouraged or discouraged. Bowen and Blackmon (2003) found that employees'

perceptions of what is the majority opinion affected whether they would express their views or identities (i.e., employees were more likely to silence themselves if they believed that they were in the minority). This finding may be particularly relevant to people of color and other minority groups, where psychological safety and a perception of support from others may be important factors in being able to let down one's guard and be comfortable expressing oneself authentically (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Edmonson, 2003; Harter, 2002; Taylor et al., 1995). Theran (2009), for example, had observed from her study sample that students from schools with more diversity generally had higher levels of voice compared to students in schools that are more homogenous. While this may appear counterintuitive since one may assume that having similar backgrounds would lead to similar "majority opinions." However, it may be that in schools with more diversity compared to those with less diversity, multiculturalism and embracing differences are encouraged as a part of the larger school culture.

Thus, from the literature, it appears that voice behaviors may depend on a number of variables that may intricately interact with one another; and the degree to which one expresses oneself authentically may depend on the social context or setting.

**Asian American Women and Voice**

Although the issue of voice is well studied in women, much of the research was conducted on European American women and may not reflect the experiences of Asian American women. While there were studies using more diverse populations (Taylor et al., 1995; Way, 1995), they have mainly centered on the experiences of African American girls and women, which may not be generalizable to Asian Americans due to differences in culture and racial history within the United States (Theran, 2009). For

example, several studies have found that while African American females do silence themselves in certain contexts, they were also more outspoken and assertive compared to their European American counterparts (Taylor et al., 1995; Theran, 2009; Way, 1995;). Scholars have pointed out that African American women have been socialized to be outspoken and to take on both traditionally male and female roles (e.g., assertive but also nurturing) as a way to counteract and survive in threatening and racist environments (Lee, Soto, Swim, & Bernstein, 2012; Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008; Taylor et al., 1995; Way, 1995). Similarly, for Asian American women, socialization (e.g., cultural expectations) as well as the history of racial experiences for this group (e.g., stereotype of being quiet and passive) may play a role in shaping voice behaviors (Hughes et al., 2006; Kawahara, 2007; Root, 1995). One study examining responses to racism, specifically examined African American and Asian American women because they appear to be on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of voice and assertive behaviors (Lee et al., 2012). In this study, Lee and colleagues (2012) found that African American women were more likely to be directly confrontational in response to racism while Asian American women tended to respond more indirectly, which confirms previous research on these two culturally different groups (Gudykunst, 2001; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Hughes et al., 2006; Matsumoto, 1993; Settles et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Moreover, some researchers believe that the way in which racism is expressed against Asian Americans may be different from the experiences of other minority groups (Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004). For example, a stereotype specific to Asian Americans, such as being the successful "model minority" has placed Asian Americans in a position where they are held up against other racial groups that are deemed "problematic" and "less

successful" (Wong & Halgin, 2006). This stereotype has served as a way to uphold the idea of meritocracy, while deflecting the issues of oppression and racism (Shih, Young, & Bucher, 2013; Wong & Halgin, 2006), resulting in not only conflicts between minority groups but also in maintaining the status quo. Additionally, since Asian Americans are seen as relatively problem free and successful, they are often overlooked in programs designed to counteract the negative effects of racial discrimination and oppression (Wong & Halgin, 2006). For example, Asian Americans are often excluded from affirmative action programs because they are deemed "successful" and not "underrepresented" (Suzuki, 2002). Thus, as a result of this "positive" stereotype, Asian Americans may be at a relative disadvantage in the context of hiring and college admissions practices (Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). The model minority myth may also result in silencing; for example, some researchers have noted that some Asian American women may feel pressure to conform to the model minority stereotype (Lee et al., 2012; Noh, 2007; Root, 1995), which may lead to increased self-monitoring and self-silencing (Noh, 2007; Root, 1995).

Another example of how Asian Americans are viewed differently compared to other minority groups can be found in the tendency for Asian Americans to be viewed through the lens of culture (e.g., culture that values education, immigrants who are foreign to this country), while less attention is paid to racial issues (Sue & Sue, 2003). The opposite appears to be the case for Black Americans who are not seen as foreigners with different cultures but are often discriminated against due to the color of their skin (Noh, 2007). Thus, while people of color may share some experiences (e.g., experiences of oppression and being silenced), it is important to recognize that the factors that

influence voice and silence may to be tied in with specific experiences of race and culture and may not be applicable across different groups with different racial histories.

**Intersectionality.** As with all women of color in this country, Asian American women have multiple social identities and face multiple oppressions (Davis, 2008; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) that may influence level of voice; thus, in conducting research on Asian American women, it is necessary to consider the intersections of culture, race and gender (Liu, Tsong, & Hayashino, 2007; Suzuki et al., 2013). Examining these multiple social identities and oppressions, would not only help to provide a more complete understanding of the lived experiences of these women, but also help elucidate how these different factors and/or their interactions with one another may influence voice.

For instance, cultural differences in communication and expressiveness may not only result in misunderstandings in multicultural settings (e.g., where direct verbal communication is expected) but also may reinforce existing stereotypes that are specific to Asian American females (i.e., quiet, compliant, lacking initiative/leadership skills, etc.). In the United States, where direct verbal communication and self-expression are privileged, behaviors that do not fit this norm may be misinterpreted. In contrast to American cultural tendencies, Asian cultures tend to value listening over speaking and place greater emphasis on maintaining group harmony than on individual self-expression (Gudykunst, 2001; Kim, 2002). Additionally, Asian cultures tend to respect hierarchy and status and people from these cultures may tend to behave deferentially and to inhibit verbal expression in the presence of those with higher statuses or power (Gudykunst, 2001; Kim, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999). When Asian people tend toward these

characteristics in the context of characteristically American settings, cultural mismatches in behaviors may lead to misunderstandings as well as reinforce stereotypes that Asian American women are passive, lacking initiative and creativity. Indeed, these cultural mismatches may undermine Asian American women, causing them to be looked upon negatively at work or school and seen as less fit for leadership roles (Burris, Ayman, Che, & Min, 2013; Green & Kim, 2005; Hune, 1998; Hyun, 2005; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009; Kawahara, Pal, & Chin, 2013). This combination of cultural, racial and systemic factors, which has been coined "the Bamboo Ceiling," may not only hinder Asian American women from advancing in their careers (Hyun, 2005) but also keep them in positions of relatively compromised power and voice.

Furthermore, the view of Asian American women as quiet and passive has also served to silence those who are more outspoken and assertive (Noh, 2007). Because stereotypes tend to de-emphasize individual differences and limit the behaviors that observers may attend to (Root, 1995) the stereotype of the submissive Asian American woman may be particularly problematic for those who do not fit this characteristic (Noh, 2007; Root, 1995). An assertive and confident Asian American female, for example, may be seen as overly aggressive when compared to the image of the stereotypically accommodating Asian American woman. Thus, the more outspoken Asian American woman's expressed perspectives may be seen or dismissed as over-reactive, hostile, or even otherwise pathological (Noh, 2007).

In addition to cultural misunderstandings, Asian American women, like other women of color, must deal regularly with both racism and sexism (Hune, 1998; Hune, 2006; Ken, 2010; Loo, & Ho, 2006; Suzuki et al., 2013; Turner, 1997a; Turner, 1997b;

Turner, 2002). The repeated experience of discrimination and microaggressions can have a negative impact on health and emotional wellbeing (Greene et al., 2006; Harrell, 2000; Liang et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2007) as well as consequences in work and school settings (Hune, 1998). Furthermore, these experiences of being invalidated and/or misunderstood may eventually lead to self-silencing (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Noh, 2007).

Thus, as illustrated by these examples, having multiple minority statuses may influence one's experiences in complex ways and addressing only one of these aspects in isolation can be problematic. According to Davis (2008) examining intersectionality has become standard in women's studies and multicultural research; to not consider these multiple differences would be to omit important information about these women's lives and would render an incomplete understanding. Furthermore, Davis (2008) described intersectionality as "the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (p. 68). This definition appears particularly apt for this study as power seems to be a common thread connecting issues of race, gender, and culture as potential factors, or a combination of factors, influencing the power to speak. The next sections will explore how voice may be influenced by culture, race, and power as well as the connection between voice and wellbeing and the role of support.

**The Role of Culture in Voice**

Cultural issues may be one reason why Asian American women may appear to be less vocal and more passive. Although the experiences and cultures of Asian American

women vary greatly, even within the same ethnic groups, there are some common features that may influence expressive behaviors for this population. Literature on cultural differences have found that, in general, Asian cultures tend to be more collectivistic or group-focused, and people from these cultures tend to value maintaining harmony with others (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey, & Hogg, 2003; Singelis & Brown, 1995). As a result, individuals from these cultures may hold back expressing their thoughts for fear that it may upset the group. Furthermore, for these more collectivistic cultures, it may be important to attend to status and hierarchy and act according to prescribed social roles in order to maintain peaceful relations with others (Tien & Olsen, 2003). In contrast, European and American cultures tend to be more individualistic (i.e., emphasizing the individual over the group) and generally value autonomy, self-expression and being separate and unique from others (Cross et al., 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991); thus, they may feel freer to voice their thoughts and often are expected to express themselves openly and directly, regardless of potential differences of opinion. This value of self-focused authenticity can be illustrated with some common phrases such as "be yourself," "be true to yourself," and "dance to the beat of your own drum;" this contrasts with the Asian maxim that "the nail that sticks outs is hammered down" (Hall, 2009).

These cultural values inevitably contribute to shaping the self-concepts of individuals within those cultures as well as their self-construals or how these individuals' understand themselves in relation to others, specifically the degree to which they view themselves as connected or separate from others (Singelis, 1994).

**Self-construal.** Whereas the terms collectivistic and individualistic are used to describe culture, the term self-construal describes how individuals perceive the self in relation to others (Cross et al., 2011). According to Singelis and Brown's (1995) conceptualization of self-construal, culture and socialization help to define one's self-concept and self-construal, which, in turn, helps to shape behavior (i.e., behaving in a manner that is congruent to self-construal). Markus and Kitayama (1991) also found that self-construal can influence key elements that help to determine behavior: (a) cognition (e.g., emphasizing attention to others and social contexts vs. emphasizing attention to self instead of social context), (b) emotions (e.g., expressing other-focused emotions such as shame vs. ego-focused emotions such as anger or pride) and (c) motivation (e.g., motivated to fit in with others vs. motivated to stand out and be unique). These individual factors that are influenced by culture and self-construal can shape communication style and how one interacts with others (Cross et al., 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis & Brown, 1995).

Although there are many possible types of self-construal (Cross et al., 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), the two most common types are the independent and the interdependent self-construals, which were identified by Markus and Kitayama (1991) and have been used to describe the prototypical self orientation of people from Western (i.e., individualistic) and Eastern (i.e., collectivistic) cultures, respectively (Cross, et al., 2011). For those with a more independent self-construal, the self is viewed as separate from others and being unique or "standing out from the crowd" is highly valued (Cross et al., 2011). Other aspects of the independent self-construal include emphasis on one's internal thoughts and feelings (e.g., intrapsychic processes), valuing self-expression,

focusing on one's own goals, and being direct and straightforward in communicating with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994).

In contrast, individuals with a more interdependent self-construal view the self as inherently connected with others and may define themselves by their relationship with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991); thus being able to fit in with others is important for self-esteem (Cross et al., 2011). Other features of the interdependent self-construal include a flexible self that adjusts to fit different social contexts and settings (e.g., social roles and relationship, hierarchy and status), the importance of knowing one's place and engaging in behaviors appropriate to one's station or relationship with another, and being indirect in communication (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). In a study demonstrating the adaptable self across different contexts, English and Chen (2007) found that Asian Americans were less consistent than European Americans in their self-description (i.e., endorsing characteristics that they felt described them) across different social contexts. Interestingly, the study also showed that while Asian Americans self-descriptions were inconsistent across settings, they were stable within contexts, over time (English & Chen, 2007) confirming previous research on culture and suggesting that "authenticity" may take on different forms, depending on culture (English & Chen, 2007; English & Chen, 2011).

Despite the conception that group-focused vs. self-focused are two seemingly polar opposite ways of being, researchers have argued that people have both independent and interdependent self-construals, and that one's cultural context may determine the self-construal that would be more prominent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Additionally some researchers have found that the two different self-construals may

come forth in different contexts (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Singelis 1994; Yamada & Singelis, 1999). In a study by Yamada and Singelis (1999), for example, it was found that bicultural individuals scored high in both interdependent and independent self-construals, suggesting the ability to "code switch" or adapt behaviors and communication in multiple cultures.

**Culture, self-construal and communication style.** The differences in communication style between individualistic and collectivistic cultures have been well documented in the research on cross-cultural communication (Gudykunst, 2001; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim, 2002; Park & Kim, 2008; Singelis & Brown, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1999). In general, those from collectivistic cultures tend to value listening over speaking and may communicate with others in more indirect ways (i.e., communication is less verbally explicit and are based on shared cultural understanding and inferences) (Hara & Kim, 2004). Those from individualistic cultures, however, tend to value speaking over listening and may communicate in more verbally direct ways (Hara & Kim, 2004).

Additionally, individuals from collectivistic cultures may tend to avoid conflict with others in order to maintain peaceful relations. Those from more individualistic cultures, on the other hand, may be more directly challenging in conflicts and may even welcome open debate (Pang, 1996). For example, in a study by Friedman, Chi and Liu (2006), it was found that Chinese students from a university in Taiwan were more likely than their American counterparts to avoid conflict based on the belief that direct confrontation would damage the relationship and out of concern for the other party. Similarly, in a study comparing Asian American and Black American women's reaction

to racism, Lee et al. (2012) found that Asian American women were less likely than were Black American women to confront the male confederate after he made a racist comment in an online interaction. Furthermore, the researchers (Lee et al., 2012) also found that Asian American women were more likely than Black women to endorse the wish to "keep the peace" when responding to the confederate's racist remark.

The directness of individualistic cultures in terms of communication may be due to the relatively less focus on external cues (e.g., prescribed roles/behaviors based on relationship) and contexts when interacting with others; thus, since individuals are seen as separate and having unique thoughts and perspectives, in order to communicate effectively, one must be verbally explicit and precise (Gudykunst et al., 1996). This contrasts with the indirectness that characterizes the communications style of those from collectivistic cultures where there is more of a reliance on nonverbal communication and messages are conveyed through shared cultural understanding and expectations, based on social context and relationships; communication, thus, involves interpreting messages that are not explicit, being sensitive to others and to context, thereby relying less on verbal expression (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

Hall (1976) describes these distinctive types of communication as high context (i.e., for collectivistic cultures or those with interdependent self-construal) and low context (i.e., individualistic cultures/independent self-construal) communication. High context communication places less focus on what is verbally expressed, relying more on shared understanding and proper interactions based on the nature of the relationship (Hall, 1976). This indirectness is thought to help facilitate relationship and societal harmony (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987), as messages are ambiguous and left to the

interpretation of the receiver; thus, even if the message is negative, the communicator has not been directly confrontational and peace is more likely to be maintained (Hall, 1976).

For these reasons, the attention to context and ability to able to adapt to different social contexts (i.e., changing one's behaviors depending on situation) as well as being able to control emotional expression in the interest of the group harmony are seen as signs of maturity in collectivistic cultures (Cross et al., 2011). In contrast, for more individualistic cultures, having a stable self across contexts and communicating confidently and assertively are seen as signs of maturity and authenticity (Cross et al., 2011). Because these two views of how one should behave and what is considered healthy and mature are so different, clashes and negative judgments may arise in multicultural settings due to cultural misunderstandings (Pailliotet, 1997; Sue et al., 2009). For example, a person who speaks frankly and directly across settings may be viewed in the U.S. as confident, honest and authentic to oneself (Gudykunst et. al, 1996); in contrast, this behavior may be viewed as rude, self-centered and immature in a more collectivistic culture. Likewise, a person who behaves differently depending on the situation and "goes with the flow" may be viewed as indecisive and passive in a more individualistic culture, but may be viewed as behaving appropriately in a more collectivistic culture.

While the cultural constructs of individualism and collectivism can give a broad overview of cultural differences, self-construal can help to examine these differences in a more precise way. In the literature on cross-cultural communication, self-construal has been tied to communication style (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Park & Kim, 2008; Singelis & Brown, 1995) and has been found to be a better predictor

of communication style than cultural individualism and collectivism (Gudykunst et al., 1996). For example, Gudykunst and colleagues (1996) found that self-construals mediated the influence of individualism and collectivism on communication style (specifically, low vs. high context communication styles) and were better predictors of communication style. Thus, culture may influence the tendency for a particular communication style because it not only defines the norms and rules of behavior for a particular culture but it also shapes individual-level factors such as self-construal and values (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

**Confucianism and the importance of relationships and social context.** One major distinction between the communication styles of those with interdependent and independent self-construals is the degree of attention to social contexts. For persons with more interdependent self-construals, the social context is an important factor in determining how one behaves and communicates, especially given that the emphasis is on group harmony and maintaining the social order. In contrast, for those with more independent self-construals, social context is less important since the focus is more on individual needs and perspectives than that of the group.

One reason for the emphasis on social context may be traced back to Confucian ideals and practices found in many Asian cultures (Park & Kim, 2008; Tien & Olsen, 2003). Many Asian cultures are heavily influenced by Confucian thought (Park & Kim, 2008), which often translates into prescribed ways of being. Confucianism originated in China from the writings of Confucius, who was a scholar during a time of political upheaval (Tien & Olsen, 2003). Given the political context of the time, much of Confucius' writings were focused predominately on maintaining societal stability and

order (Tien & Olsen, 2003). Confucianism is based on the idea that proper relationships are the basis for a good society (Yum, 1988). For example, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of adhering to specific role-defined behaviors to maintain social harmony (Tien & Olsen, 2003). Thus, respecting hierarchy and behaving in accordance to one's status is one way to help maintain the social order. The importance of status and hierarchy is illustrated, for example, in the Chinese names for family members. For the Chinese, family members have very specific titles that identify not only a person's generation but also whether they are on the maternal or paternal side of the family and whether the relationship is through marriage or not. So while the title "aunt" is a general term for a female sibling or sister-in-law of either parent, the Chinese give relationship titles that are as specific as, for example, one's mother's younger brother's wife. Thus, in a single title, information about another family member's status in relation to oneself is identified and specific appropriate behaviors are expected. Another example of status conscious communication can be found in Japanese and Korean languages. In these languages, there are several ways to say the same thing (i.e., informal, polite and honorific levels), depending on the relationship (Park & Kim, 2008; Yum, 1988). Again, the way in which verbal communication is used signals the statuses of the individuals and the relationships between them.

It should be noted that, in addition to attention to status and hierarchy, many Confucian influenced Asian cultures are also patriarchal and the expected role and behaviors of women are specified. For example, the attributes of women include being subservient and obedient to the men in their lives, being agreeable and pleasant, having a docile, quiet demeanor, and being skilled in household tasks and serving in-laws (Tien &

Olsen, 2003). As a consequence, for Asian American women, both cultural and power/gender issues may play a role in preventing them from fully expressing their thoughts, feelings and perspectives.

In sum, while there are great variations among Asian American women, the role of culture may affect not only how one views oneself in relation to others but also may shape how one interacts, behaves and communicates with others. These cultural factors may also interact with other issues such as racism and discrimination to create barriers to Asian American women's ability to speak freely.

**The Role of Racial Issues in Silencing**

Although Asian Americans are often seen as the "model minority" who have overcome racial and other obstacles to succeed, researchers have found that they do face discrimination that keep them from reaching their full potential in the work and school settings (Hune, 1998; Hyun, 2005; Kawahara & Van Kirk, 2010; Poon, 2011; Sue et al., 2009). Furthermore, it is well documented that the experience of racial discrimination and stereotyping can have a great negative impact on people of color and other marginalized groups. The experience of racism and discrimination has, for example, been associated with poor psychological outcomes including depression and poor self-esteem (Greene et al., 2006; Harrell, 2000; Liang et al., 2007; Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit, & Rasmus, 2014; Smith et al., 2007). Other researchers have found that the effects of racism can be cumulative over time, and like trauma, can result in complex PTSD (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Carter, 2007; Franklin et al., 2006; Lowe et al., 2012; Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Sanchez-Hucles, 1999). Given that racism can occur at

the individual, institutional and cultural levels (Sue, 2005), it can have a significant impact on the lives of people of color.

Additionally, encountering multiple microaggressions or more subtle forms of racism can be constant reminders of being unwelcomed or set apart, resulting in hypervigilance and significant expenditure of cognitive energy in order to cope in a threatening environment (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Smith et al., 2007). Repeated exposure to racial discrimination over time may also result in self-silencing as a protective defense against a hostile environment (Cheung, 1993; Housee, 2010; Shih et al., 2013). For example, Smith et al. (2007) reported a number of physical and psychological symptoms associated with racial battle fatigue (which is a result of chronic race-related stress) which included "keeping quiet" and social and emotional withdrawal. Thus, the perception of and/or past experiences of racial discrimination may contribute to feelings of vulnerability and a heightened need to protect oneself from harm (e.g., self-silencing).

Pang (1996) describes two types of silences, based on Cheung's (1993) writings about silence in Asian American literature, that are particularly relevant to loss of voice due to a hostile racial climate: oppressive silence and submissive silence. Oppressive silence occurs when an individual or group of people are not given a chance to voice their thoughts, feelings and perspectives (Pang, 1996). An example of oppressive silence, at the individual level, is being excluded from discussions (e.g., being ignored by the teacher in the classroom when hand is raised). Oppressive silence may also be manifested at a broader level with, for example, the exclusion of people of color in history books (Pang, 1996). While oppressive silence is a result of being obstructed from

speaking or expressing one's perspectives, submissive silence occurs when an individual keeps silent due to feeling unable to voice opinions or out of fear of negative consequences for speaking up (Pang, 1996). Submissive silence may be found in cases where people do not feel safe to speak freely (e.g., fear of losing their job, fear of further marginalization, etc.) or they may remain silent (i.e., give up trying) after repeated experiences of being unheard (Pang, 1996).

Other scholars have also noted the self-silencing may be a way to protect oneself from an unwelcoming or hostile environment (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Cheung, 1993; Housee, 2010; London et al., 2012; Mitra, 2001; Mitra, 2004; Shih et al., 2013). Brown and Gilligan (1992), for example, discussed the importance of having a safe space that is free from the silencing from others and where individuals are able to express themselves openly. In Housee's study (2010), it was found that female Asian students often held back their thoughts and opinions in class, particularly when provocative, racially charged topics were being discussed; however, when the students were out of class and in safer spaces, they were able to spontaneously and more openly express their views on the class discussions. Similarly, Mitra (2001; 2004) also found that when provided with a safe space, South Asian women, who are traditionally silenced and powerless, were able to find a voice through an online community.

Shih et al. (2013) found that people of color and other disenfranchised groups adjust their social identities in reaction to perceived discrimination as a measure of self-protection. Individuals may manage their identities to maintain safety and put themselves in more advantageous positions by changing their identification with certain groups (Shih

et al., 2013); examples of this include emphasizing one's identity as a woman (while de-emphasizing one's racial identity) and not disclosing sexual orientation to others. Individuals may also take advantage of stereotypes by emphasizing aspects of oneself that fit the stereotype (Shih et al., 2013); for example, a woman may de-emphasize the quantitative aspects of a work project but emphasize the importance of having strong social and verbal skills (i.e., keeping consistent with stereotypes of women). These findings (Shih et al., 2013) are consistent with Bowen and Blackmon's (2003) conceptualization of workplace silence and may be applied to gay and lesbian employees who hide their personal identities out of fear of marginalization. Although these strategies (i.e., identity management and stereotype re-association) may be effective in coping immediately with a hostile social climate, it comes at the cost of silencing important aspects of one's self (e.g., social identity, valid perspectives and experiences, etc.) and this silence may, over time, generalize to other domains beyond one's identity (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003).

In sum, these studies demonstrate the importance of social climate and the role it may play in supporting or discouraging voice for Asian American women and other minority groups.

**Microaggressions.** Although overt forms of racism have decreased over time, some scholars have argued that the modern form of racism, which is much more subtle, may be more insidious because of its ambiguous nature (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions, which was a term originally coined by Chester Pierce in 1970 (Sue et al., 2007) refers to everyday exchanges or indignities that are experienced by people of color and that communicate hostility and are derogatory or insulting to the target group

(Sue et al., 2007). Some examples, of racial microaggressions may include: being ignored or receiving less attention/mentorship from teachers, being scrutinized more at airport security checkpoints, being perceived as foreign, being ignored or, conversely, being followed by salesperson at a store, etc.).

Because it is ambiguous and often committed unknowingly (i.e., unconsciously) by well-intentioned people, microaggressions may be easily dismissed or unacknowledged, despite the harm incurred (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2007). Moreover, since they occur frequently (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007) and on the individual, institutional and cultural levels (Sue, 2005), it can have a pervasive impact on the lives of people of color and other marginalized groups and contribute to a "chilly" or unwelcoming climate that may hinder voice (Poon, 2011).

Sue and colleagues (2007) found in their study eight specific types of microaggressions against Asian Americans. These microaggressions include: (a) alien in own land (e.g., being seen as foreign even if the family has been in the country for generations); (b) ascription of intelligence (e.g., stereotype of Asian American as math geniuses); (c) exoticization of Asian women; (d) invalidation of interethnic differences; (e) denial of racial reality; (f) pathologizing cultural values/communication styles; (g) second class citizenship; and (h) invisibility (Sue et al., 2007). Taken together, Sue et al. (2007) found that constantly experiencing these types of microaggressions resulted in feelings of anger, rage, alienation and invalidation. Additionally, the study participants commonly stated that they felt invisible and unrecognized (Sue et al., 2007).

While racial microaggressions may appear inconsequential (Sue et al., 2007), it is important to note that they are known to be frequent, everyday experiences for people of

color and other minority groups (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007) and the negative effects of these experience may be cumulative (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2007). In a recent study on microaggressions for Asian Americans, Ong and colleagues (2013) found that in their sample of 152 participants who kept track of and recorded microaggressions encountered each day (over the course of fourteen days), 78% of the participants reported at least one microaggression occurring within that time period. This result is particularly notable because the study did not rely on participants' memory of past events; instead, with daily tracking via a secure Internet website and specific timeframes for diary completion, the study was able to capture the incidences of microaggressions as they occurred day to day (Ong et al., 2013). Experiencing frequent episodes of microaggressions consistently over time may make it difficult for Asian American women to voice their thoughts and perspectives (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Noh, 2007). Furthermore, if individuals seeking social support are met with invalidation (especially given the ambiguous nature of subtle racism and microaggressions), it may result in re-injury and may, in turn, lead to self-silencing over time (Liang et al., 2007; Lowe et al., 2012).

**Stereotypes.** Common stereotypes of Asian American women as quiet and submissive can serve to silence this group, especially in cases of cultural misunderstandings. Often in multicultural settings within the United States, European American culture is seen as the norm and differences may be pathologized or seen in a negative light (Noh, 2007; Pailliotet, 1997; Sue et al., 2007). Asian American students in Sue and colleagues' study (2007), for example, discussed feelings of frustration that verbal participation is valued and is used to judge the student's level of attentiveness and

engagement in class. These students felt at a disadvantage having to conform to norms that are different from their cultural upbringing (Sue et al., 2007). At the same time, being less verbal or communicating in a more indirect way may serve to reinforce the stereotype of the passive and meek Asian American female; however, cultural mismatches and the existence of specific stereotypes alone do not fully explain the silencing of Asian American women.

Research on stereotypes may also provide some insight into the silencing process for Asian American women. Stereotypes can play an influential role in shaping the behaviors of the stereotyped group (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Gibson, Losee, & Vitiello, 2014; Schamader, Hall & Croft, 2015; Shih et al., 2013; Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006). For example, stereotype threat, which is the fear of inadvertently confirming negative stereotypes through one's actions (Schmader et al., 2015), has been shown to hinder intellectual performance due to the added psychological burden (Schamader et al., 2015; Steele, 1997). Although the theory on stereotype threat was originally applied to studies exploring racial achievement gaps, it has since been expanded beyond the academic context (Schmader et al., 2015; Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrada, & Schultz, 2012). For example, stereotype threat can affect non-academic performance, cognition, motivation and decision-making (Schmader et al., 2015). Furthermore, scholars have found that chronic stereotype threat can result in disengagement and disidentification from a particular domain that is negatively stereotyped (Schmader et al., 2015; Steele, 1997; Woodcock et al., 2012). For instance, women who have been exposed to the stereotype that females do not perform well in the math and sciences may eventually lose interest in this area and/or may not consider

STEM careers as an option at all (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gergardstein, 2002; Schmader et al., 2015; Shapiro & Williams, 2012).

Although, to date, there are no existing studies specifically examining the role of stereotype threat on voice behaviors in Asian American women, this phenomenon of disengaging from a particular domain could conceivably apply to Asian American women; for example, stereotyping Asian American women as passive, quiet people who lack leadership skills, may lead to disidentification from certain jobs or careers/fields and may help to explain the small percentage of Asian American women in leadership positions (Burris et al., 2013; Eagly & Chin, 2010). Additionally, there has been some research indicating that stereotypes may be incorporated into one's self-concept, resulting in self-stereotyping (Sinclair et al., 2006). In their study, Sinclair et al. (2006) primed Asian American women with either race or gender before asking them to evaluate their math and verbal abilities. Results showed that the women, acting consistent with stereotypes, rated their math ability more favorably when race was salient; however, they rated their verbal ability more favorably when gender was salient (Sinclair et al., 2006). Sinclair et al. (2006) also found similar results with European American men and women (i.e., women evaluated verbal ability more favorably in the gender salient condition and math more favorably in the race salient condition while; in contrast, men rated their math ability more favorably in the gender salient condition and verbal ability more favorably in the race salient condition). Furthermore, the researchers found that these self-evaluations were associated with participants' perception of others' evaluation of their verbal and math abilities, suggesting that self-stereotyping may be a function of perceived expectancies of others' (Sinclair et al., 2006).

Other studies have demonstrated that the effects of stereotypes on behaviors (i.e., stereotyped individuals acting in ways that are consistent with stereotypes) can occur simply by priming an individual with a stereotype or identity associated with a stereotype (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Gibson et al., 2014; Shih, Ambady, Richeson, Fujita, & Gray, 2002; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999; Sinclair et al., 2006). For example, Shih et al. (1999) primed Asian American women with either race or gender identity (i.e., asking them to identify their race or gender) before administering a set of math questions. It was found that when race was primed, the Asian American women performed better in the math task than when gender was primed (Shih et al., 1999), thus, the women acted consistently with racial (i.e., Asians are good in math) and gender stereotypes (i.e., women do poorly in math). The researchers (Shih et al., 1999) also explored whether the differences in performance were due to the specific stereotype rather than the social identity itself (i.e., being Asian) by replicated the study with a group of recently immigrated Asian women who were not familiar with the stereotype that Asians excel in math. In their replication, it was confirmed that knowledge of the stereotype was a significant factor in the results: the participants who were unaware of the stereotype of Asians exceling in math performed similarly to the control group in the math task (Shih et al., 1999). Thus, it was shown that individuals must be aware of the stereotype for it to affect their behavior, which is consistent with the literature on stereotype threat and stereotype susceptibility (Schmader et al., 2015; Steele, 1997;). Gibson et al. (2014) later replicated the Shih et al. (1999) study with a larger sample size and found a similar pattern of results and confirmed that the awareness of the stereotype was necessary to

elicit the expected responses from the participants (i.e., acting in accordance to stereotype).

Although no study, to date, have examined the role of stereotypes in voice behaviors for Asian American females specifically, the results of these and other research on how stereotypes affect behaviors in other populations (e.g., women, African Americans, etc.), suggest that similar patterns may appear for Asian American women in terms of silencing. Further research would be necessary to confirm these speculations.

Although studies on stereotype susceptibility and stereotype threat demonstrate that stereotyped individuals may act in ways that are consistent with stereotypes, the research on backlash effects suggest that individuals who act in counterstereotypical ways but may be punished for doing so (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011; Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999); thus, there may be strong pressure to conform to stereotyped behaviors (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). While most of the studies on backlash effects were conducted to examine the experiences of women who defy traditional gender roles, Phelan & Rudman's (2010) study explored the role of backlash in racial stereotype maintenance specifically. In their study, Phelan & Rudman (2010), had participants "lose" to either an Asian American or European American confederate (of the same gender) in a trivia contest. Participants were challenged on their knowledge of one of three topics: beer (which European Americans were expected to typically know more about), Asian culture (typical of Asian Americans) and jazz and hip hop music (considered not typical for either group). Participants were later given a chance to sabotage the confederate in the following round (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). Results from

the study confirmed the researcher's (Phelan & Rudman, 2010) hypothesis that Asian Americans suffered more backlash when they behaved in ways that were counterstereotypical compared to their White counterparts. Because the experiment may be influenced by the possibility that participants might want to retaliate after losing the contest, Phelan & Rudman (2010), conducted a second study where participants rated a rap song by an "unsigned" artist. All of the participants listened to the same song but were presented with a photograph of either a White or Black rap artist (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). As expected, participants rated the singer who conformed to stereotyped expectations (i.e., Black artist) as more likable and musically competent and they were more wiling to give economic support (i.e., buy the CD) to that rap artist (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). Furthermore, Berdahl and Min (2012), found negative consequences in the workplace for East Asians in North America who defied stereotyped behaviors: those who were more dominant or who showed warmth in social interactions experienced more racial harassment than non-dominant East Asians and both dominant and non-dominant employees of other racial groups.

Berdahl and Min's (2012) work and other research on backlash effects (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011; Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999) demonstrate the pressure people of color and other marginalized groups may have to conform to stereotypes, particularly given the possible negative consequences for acting in ways that defy racial expectations. Thus, Asian American women who are outspoken and assertive may face sanctions and be silenced (Noh, 2007; Root, 1995).

Taken together, the research on racial factors in the silencing of Asian American women indicate the importance of having a social climate that is welcoming and supportive of voice for all groups. Additionally, these studies highlight the role that stereotypes may play in constraining the behaviors of the stereotyped group, which may, in turn, contribute to the maintenance of these stereotypes and the suppression of voice. In sum, these racial factors keep Asian American women from fully and authentically participating in society, silence their perspectives and contributions, and disempower them by defining and distorting their realities through the lens of racism.

**Power**

Power is a common theme that that ties together the various factors that may influence voice in this study. Power inequities, for example, are embedded in the context of gender (Gilligan, 1993; Mitra, 2001; Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005), race (Mitra, 2001; Poon, 2011; Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008; Vescio et al., 2005) and in interactions with authority (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). Power is also relevant in the way culture may influence voice in that cultures have varying degrees of emphasis on hierarchy and status (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Power, not surprisingly, has been linked to level of voice in a number of studies, including literature on workplace interactions (Chan 2014; Islam & Zyphur, 2005; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998) as well as interpersonal relationships (Neff & Harter, 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2003; Neff & Suizzo, 2006).

In a study on relationship styles, Neff & Harter (2003) found that those who tended toward an "other-focused" style were more likely to have less power in the relationship compared to those who had a more "self-focused" style. Moreover, those

who endorsed a “mutuality” style of interacting felt that their relationships tended to be balanced in power (Neff & Harter, 2003). Each of these relationship styles were also linked to feelings of authenticity: those with an ”other-focused” style (and thus, reduced power) were likely to feel inauthentic in the relationship (e.g., suppressing thoughts and feelings) while those with a “self-focused style (and thus, increased power) tended to be free to express themselves authentically within the relationship, relative to their counterparts (Neff & Harter, 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2003). Furthermore, Neff and Harter (2003) conceptualized these three relationship styles as responses to aspects of the relationship context, including circumstances of power; as such, a particular relationship style is not a static aspect of a person’s self, but may change with different relationship dynamics (i.e., social context). Neff and Suizzo’s (2006) study examining the relationship between power and authentic expression within romantic relationships for European Americans and Mexican Americans also demonstrated that for both groups, perceived lack of power in the relationship was associated with loss of voice. Similarly, Anderson and Berdahl (2002) found that, in an experimental study where power was randomly assigned to some participants, those who felt more power were more likely to express themselves more authentically, while those who had less power tended to inhibit their opinions and thoughts. Furthermore, a study by Chan (2014) revealed that, in the work setting, Chinese employees’ voice was negatively associated with authoritarian leadership; that is, employees were significantly less likely to voice thoughts and opinions when their supervisors possess an authoritarian (i.e., power salient) vs. egalitarian style of leadership (Chan, 2014).

Although, based on the literature on power and voice, there appears to be a straightforward relationship between voice and power, Islam and Zyphur (2005) found that social dominance orientation (i.e., the degree to which an individual believes in the legitimacy of social hierarchies) was an important factor that moderated the relationship between voice and power. That is, the relationship between voice and power may be strongest for those who are most accepting of hierarchical social structures (Islam & Zyphur, 2005). This finding (Islam & Zyphur, 2005) may be particularly relevant for Asian American women given that in many Asian cultures there is an increased attention to and respect for social hierarchy and appropriate behaviors based on status (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Gudykunst, 2001; Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Research on co-cultural and muted groups also link communication with power (Orbe, 1998). According to co-cultural theory, in every society there is a hierarchical structure that privileges and gives power to certain groups over others (e.g., in the U.S. culture these groups include: men, heterosexuals, European Americans, etc.) and those privileged groups create, maintain, and reinforce systems that reflect their worldviews (Orbe, 1998); thus, those who hold less power are given less opportunities to voice their perspective and in this way become underrepresented and marginalized. When certain individuals' experiences are inadequately represented and reflected in society, this state of affairs can be disempowering and can serve to maintain inequitable power structures (Orbe, 1998; Sue et al., 2008). In essence, those in the dominant groups have the power to suppress and/or invalidate the lived experiences of certain groups and, thus, are able to define "reality" (Sue et al., 2008).

One striking example of how power can have a dramatic influence on voice and self-silencing can be found in Mitra's research on South Asian women's utilization of a internet community (Mitra, 2004). According to Mitra (2004) those who possess social and financial resources have the ability to speak through the media and thus, have the power to shape public opinion and culture on a grand scale. Although South Asian women have traditionally voiced their concerns through protests (e.g., demonstrations, rallies, etc.), their efforts had limited effect due to geographic limitations (Mitra, 2004). Additionally, large media companies, which tended to be controlled by those in power, often chose not to cover these protests for national and international audiences (Mitra, 2004); thus, the voices of the women were largely left unheard. The Internet, however, provided a forum and opportunity for marginalized groups to voice their perspectives to a global audience (Mitra, 2001; 2004). Specifically, the Internet provided a relatively safe space for South Asian women to have a voice and make alliances through online communities (Mitra, 2001). Furthermore, through these cyber communities, the women in Mitra's study (2004) were empowered by the ability to renegotiate their identities, which were previously defined by those with power (Mitra, 2001). Thus, instead of being silent in the face of oppression or protesting without being heard, they were able to not only express their concerns and perspectives but also call out the behaviors of the oppressors and demand a response (e.g., acknowledgment and/or further discussion, etc.). Through this process, the women were able to redefine themselves by moving from being a nameless, voiceless group to empowered women who have a place at the table and valid perspectives to share. This example of voice and empowerment through the Internet highlights the importance of having an environment or social climate that minimizes

power differentials, thereby creating a safe space that is conducive to voice and authenticity.

One particularly successful website, SAWNET, was characterized by specific features that were designed to remove the presence of power and authority and, in essence, give authorship to the South Asian women who used the site (Mitra, 2004). For example, the website did not make any references to authorship of the website (e.g., no "about the webmaster" section) but only stated that it was a forum for those interested in the issues of South Asian women (Mitra, 2004). By allowing a space for forum contributors to voice their thoughts and opinions without censorship and other limitations, the women were able to participate in discussions freely and, over time, through the sharing of previously unheard perspectives, they were able to redefine their identities (Mitra, 2001; Mitra, 2004).

In sum, these studies point to the significant role that power may play in the ability for Asian American women to voice their thoughts and perspectives. The issue of power may be particularly relevant for Asian American women, given their multiple minority statuses that often place them in positions where they have relatively less power. Additionally, being in a less powerful position combined with cultural expectations that potentially involve a demand for respecting hierarchy and status, may result in relatively low levels of voice for this population. Moreover, being in a less powerful position may result in an increased a sense of vulnerability that may heighten concerns of further marginalization and other negative consequences, thus, making it difficult for these women to "speak up" (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Islam & Zyphur, 2005, Van Dyne et

al., 2003). These studies, again, underscore the potential role of the social context characteristics, such as power differentials, in allowing and hindering voice.

**The Relationship between Voice and Wellbeing**

Scholars who have written about voice and self-silencing have documented a number of negative consequences for lack of voice. These consequences include a variety of *psychological* problems, including adjustment difficulties at work/school (Cortina & Magley, 2003), as well as negative psychological outcomes such as depression (Flett, Besser, Hewitt, & Davis, 2007; Jack, 1991; Jack & Ali, 2010; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Theran, 2011), disordered eating (Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Gratch et al., 1995), anxiety (Schrick, Sharp, Zvonkovic, & Reifman, 2012), psychological distress (Hurst & Beesley, 2013) and low self-esteem (Harter et al., 1998; Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson, & Tolman, 2008; Theran, 2010). Additionally, some researchers have also found that a relative lack of voice, as demonstrated by the suppression of one's thoughts and emotions, is even associated with *physiological* changes in the body, including increased cardiovascular activation (Butler et al., 2003) and increased blood pressure (Gross & Levenson, 1997; Roberts, Levenson & Gross, 2008).

Butler et al. (2003) found that suppressing self-expression has produced both physiological and social consequences. In their study, Butler and colleagues (Butler et al., 2003) linked pairs of women who did not know each other and asked them to discuss an upsetting short film both had been asked to watch prior to the conversation; one woman was asked to suppress her emotions (i.e., the suppressor) while the other was uninstructed. The researchers (Butler et al., 2003) found that suppressing one's feelings in a conversation was enough to disrupt communication (e.g., suppressor was distracted

and less responsive), which, interestingly, produced higher blood pressure in the uninstructed conversation partner. Furthermore, the researchers (Butler et al., 2003) found that the suppressors' blood pressures also increased when they replicated the study. Additionally, the suppressors' partners felt less rapport and were less motivated to become further acquainted with the suppressors. Thus, emotional suppression not only resulted in higher blood pressure for both parties but also appeared to have negative consequences for the relationship. Similarly, self-silencing at work and school settings can also result in disrupted social interactions and produce feelings of alienation that can further exacerbate emotional distress (London et al., 2012).

Research has suggested that although suppression of voice may often be an attempt to protect oneself from the negative consequences of speaking out (Cortina & Magley, 2003), in some cases, it can result in doing more harm than good (Cortina & Magley, 2003). For example, in a study on voice and retaliation in the workplace, Cortina and Magley (2003) found that workers who remained silent in the face of mistreatment fared the worst in terms of psychological and physical wellbeing, even when compared to those who spoke out and endured retaliation. Thus, keeping silent in order to avoid further abuse, appeared to be associated with worse psychological and health outcomes than speaking out, even when subjected to abusive consequences for doing so. This finding underscores the significant impact that self-silencing may have on wellbeing.

Although numerous research studies on self-silencing have shown the detrimental effects on health and psychological wellbeing that can result from the loss of voice (Butler et al., 2003; Flett et al., 2007; Gratch et al., 1995; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Harter et al., 1998; Hurst & Beesley, 2013; Impett et al., 2008; Jack, 1991; Jack & Ali,

2010; Roberts et al., 2008; Schrick et al., 2012; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Theran, 2010; Theran, 2011), some mixed findings have suggested that it is worth examining the role of culture and ethnicity in this connection between voice and wellbeing (Soto et al., 2011; Carr et al., 1996). For example, Carr et al. (1996) found ethnic differences in the relationship between self-silencing and depression for European American and African American women. Specifically, while both European and African American women silenced themselves to a similar degree, the relationship between self-silencing and depression was only significant for the European American women (Carr et al., 1996).

Soto et al. (2011) also found that the suppression of emotions was associated with negative psychological outcomes for European American college students but not for Hong Kong Chinese students. These results seem to support the idea that the relationship between wellbeing and emotional expression (or restraint) is dependent upon whether the behavior is culturally congruent to the culture at large (i.e., showing restraint in expression is not associated with negative psychological consequences if the behavior is culturally scripted). However, the study did not examine these issues in a multicultural setting (i.e., both the groups in the study were in a setting that was within their culture) and results may not be applicable in more diverse settings, where cultural expectations may be more variable. Additionally, it is presumed that racial and cultural issues that may play a role in inhibiting voice may be less prominent in this study as both groups were in settings where they are considered the majority/dominant group. For Asian American women, who often straddle both American and Asian cultures, the relationship between wellbeing and voice may be more complex and additional cultural contradictions, as well as possible negative racial dynamics, may contribute to stress and psychological distress.

In contrast to these studies that suggest that culture and ethnicity may moderate the relationship between self-silencing and wellbeing, other studies found that lack of voice or self-silencing was associated with poorer psychological (Gratch et al., 1995; Grant, Jack, Fitzpatrick, Ernst, 2011; Jack & Ali, 2010; Neff & Suizzo, 2006) and physical health (Roberts et al., 2008) across cultures and ethnicities. Of these studies, however, few have focused specifically on Asian American women. The present study was designed to bridge this gap by extending existing literature on voice and wellbeing among Asian American women.

**Support for Voice**

Given the negative consequences that lack of voice may have on individuals' social (Butler et al., 2003), psychological (Flett et al., 2007; Jack, 1991; Jack & Ali, 2010; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Theran, 2011) and physical wellbeing (Butler et al., 2003; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Roberts et al., 2008), it stands to reason that research should be done to elucidate ways of encouraging voice. Although cultural scripts may constrain some Asian American women from voicing their thoughts and feelings freely (Tien & Olsen, 2003), Mitra (2004) speculated that just having the opportunity or space to speak may be as liberating as the actual behavior; for example, being given the opportunity to speak or share perspectives but also being allowed to decide whether or not to speak can be empowering. In short, having a social environment where one felt welcomed, validated and encouraged to speak may be important for voice and authenticity (Harter, 2002).

The notion that voice is fostered through supportive relationships and context has previously been introduced by feminist and multicultural scholars. The extensive

literature on women's psychology and relational cultural theory has pointed to the importance of relational support and validation in facilitating voice (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1991; Harter, 1997; Harter et al., 1998; Jordan, 2004). For example, in a study examining teacher and classmate influences on academic motivation, self-esteem and voice, Harter (1996) found that among students who had lowest levels of voice, the most frequently endorsed reason for lack of voice with both teachers and peers was the lack of validation that students experienced from teachers and peers. In a later study, Harter et al. (1998) also found that for high school students, perceived support for voice was significantly correlated with level of voice within the same social contexts; for example, having a higher level of perceived support for voice with peers was associated with higher levels of voice behaviors with peers. Additionally, in testing a model predicting false self behaviors (i.e., acting and speaking in ways that do not reflect one's true self), Harter et al. (1996) found that for adolescents, the quality of support and level of support from both peers and parents predicted hope for future support; this, in turn, predicted whether or not an individual engaged in behaviors that reflected his or her true self.

Similarly, research on the workplace also suggests that supportive climate plays a significant role in facilitating voice. For example, researchers have found that individuals in the work setting were less likely to engage in voice behaviors when they were uncertain whether they would receive support (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) or if they felt that the predominant opinion was in opposition to their views (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). Moreover, research has suggested that the fear and threat of alienation that may result from voicing differing viewpoints in this type of setting may be particularly

powerful for already marginalized groups (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003) and thus, may keep them silenced. These findings are consistent with relational cultural theory and women's psychology literature that suggests that suppression of one's authentic self is a result of an unsupportive social climate, and/or relationships in which one feels invalidated and unheard or face sanctions for being authentic---in essence, lack of support for authentic expression (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Jack, 1995; Harter, 1997; Harter, 2002; Harter et al., 1998; Jordan, 2004;).

Although many studies have demonstrated the relationship between support and level of voice (Harter et al., 1998; Harter et al., 1996), some qualitative research has demonstrated how voice may be fostered and maintained in settings that are supportive and encourage the sharing of different perspectives (Mitra, 2004; Spira et al., 2002). For example, Mitra's research (2004) found that the lack of censorship and removal of the webmaster's control (i.e., authority) over what is being discussed provided an environment that allowed South Asian women to speak frankly about the issues that were relevant to them.

Similarly, Spira et al.'s (2002) qualitative study of girls in a bilingual/bicultural environment found that the girls were able to voice their thoughts and perspectives freely due to the school environment, which supported their identities as bicultural and bilingual individuals. The girls were participants of a group of programs housed within a school that was designed to support girls' healthy development (Spira et al., 2002). The programs were embedded in a larger bicultural (i.e., Mexican community) and bilingual contexts and the school administrators worked to create an environment that celebrated biculturalism (Spira et al., 2002). Additionally, the programs were designed specifically

to encourage voice, based on the theory that girls begin to evince reduced voice during adolescence (Spira et al., 2002). The researchers found that the girls were willing to express opinions that were considered negative or unpleasant (Spira et al., 2002). Furthermore, they were able to openly disagree with researcher's perspective during a taped interview and were able to reaffirm their points of view (Spira et al., 2002). This display of voice and authenticity contrasts with other qualitative research on voice where the researchers, who were seen as authority figures, noticed the study participants were at times guarded and kept their thoughts and emotions in check (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor et al., 1995).

From these examples and from the extant literature on voice, it appears that relationships and social contexts that are supportive of voice may play a significant role in creating spaces that allow Asian American women to act and speak freely and authentically.

**The Present Study**

This study examined the experience of voice for Asian American women in different social contexts. Although the extant research on women's voice is extensive, few studies have focused specifically on the experiences of Asian American women. This study aims address this gap and add to the existing literature on voice for Asian American women, specifically. The study explored the contexts and factors that may influence level of voice for Asian American women such as culture, race, gender and power. Additionally, the study examined the relationship between voice and wellbeing and the role of support on fostering voice. More specifically, the present study aims to examine the following research questions:

**1. What is the relationship between level of voice and psychological wellbeing?**

H1a: Higher levels of voice will be correlated with higher self-esteem and with lower levels of psychological distress.

H1b: Lower levels of voice will be correlated with lower self-esteem and higher levels of psychological distress.

**2. What is the relationship between culture/self-construal and voice?**

H2a: Higher independent self-construal will be associated with higher levels of voice.

H2b: Higher interdependent self-construal will be associated with lower levels of voice.

**3. Does level of voice differ across different social contexts? (i.e., power, race and gender salient environments)?**

H3a: It is predicted that voice will vary, depending on the social context.

H3b: It is predicted that higher levels of voice will occur in contexts involving peers, Asians, and females.

H3c: Lower levels of voice are predicted to occur in contexts involving authority (i.e., power differential), non-Asians, and males.

**4. Does perceived support for voice differ across different social contexts? (i.e., power, race and gender salient environments)?**

H4a: It is predicted that perceived support for voice will vary, depending on the social context.

H4b: It is predicted that perceived support for voice will be higher in contexts involving peers, Asians, and females.

H4c: Lower levels of perceived support for voice are predicted to occur in contexts involving authority (i.e., power differential), non-Asians, and males.

**5. Is the experience of racism-related stress associated with voice behaviors?**

H5a: Higher levels of racism-related stress will be associated with lower levels of voice. Conversely, lower levels of racism-related stress will be associated with higher levels of voice.

**6. Is there a relationship between level of voice and support for voice?**

H6a: Within each social context, perceived support for voice will be positively correlated with level of voice (i.e., higher levels of support will be correlated with higher levels of voice while lower levels of support would be correlated with lower voice).

# Chapter 3 (Method)

## Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Participants were 190 adult women (18 or older) who self-identified as "Asian" or "Asian-American." They were recruited via various Asian American organizations, relevant listservs, e-mail, social media and word of mouth. Recruitment through organizations, listservs and message boards occurred after attaining permission from the moderators of these organizations. The Internet sites and organizations that were contacted include: The National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP), Angry Asian Man, Asian Nation, More than Serving Tea and Sampan (an Asian American newspaper). The participants accessed the survey through an Internet link to Qualtrics, an online data collection service. This data collection method, which allows participants to complete surveys in their own time and at their convenience, was used in the effort to maximize response rates and to include a diverse group of Asian American females (e.g., diverse regions, age, occupation, etc.). Surveys took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

All participants had the opportunity to read the informed consent online, which contained information about their participation (e.g., confidentiality, data storage, etc.); and they provided consent online before completing the survey. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. Survey data was kept confidential. Participants were also given the researcher's contact information should they require additional support (e.g., information on resources such as counseling services). It was anticipated, however, that this study would pose minimal risk to the participants.

Upon completion of the surveys, participants were given an option of being entered in a drawing for one of the following prizes: (a) one grand prize of $100 amazon.com gift certificate or (b) one of four $25 gift certificates to Amazon.com. Participant contact information was collected for award purposes only. This information was separated from the data and was kept confidential. A power analysis using the G*Power computer program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was conducted for linear regression to estimate the required sample size for this study. With power (1 - $\beta$) set to .80 and an alpha of .05, results suggested that a minimum of 115 participants were required to detect a small effect size (Cohen, 1992).

**Measures**

All participants completed a demographics questionnaire along with the following surveys:

**Voice in relational context.** This study used a modified version of a measure of voice (Harter et al., 1998) within different relational contexts (e.g., peers, professors, mentors, etc.). This study assessed voice in eight different social contexts; each context consisted of 5 items that measured voice within that context. Thus, for this study the voice measure consisted of a total of 40 items. Relational contexts were adapted for the purposes of the present study. This questionnaire queried participants about the extent to which they felt they could "share what they are really thinking", "say what's on their mind," "express their opinions," communicate "what's important to them" and "express their point of view" in eight different peer and authority social contexts. Each of the five questions included two statements to convey opposing experiences (e.g., "Some women share what they are really thinking with their male peers" BUT "Other women find it

hard to share what they are thinking with their male peers"). The two statements were separated into two columns and participants were asked to decide which of the two statements best described them and to rate whether that statement was "Sort of true for me" or "really true for me."

Preceding the above five questions was a statement that prompted the participants to answer the questions with a specific social context in mind. Each prompt for a social context began with "Saying what I think around…" The social context of interest was then added to complete the sentence. For example, for the "male peers context," participants were prompted with the statement, "Saying what I think around my male peers…"

For the current study, eight social contexts were chosen for their salience in gender, power, and race. Specifically, level of voice in the following relational contexts was examined:

***Peers***. Peers were defined as people who are your equals and may include friends, colleagues/classmates and coworkers. The following are the specific peer contexts used in the study:

- Asian peers
- Non Asian peers
- Male peers
- Female peers

***Authority/Superiors.*** Authority was defined as people in powerful or influential positions in one's life. Examples include bosses/supervisors, professors/teachers, and mentors. The specific authority contexts in the study are:

- Asian Authority
- Non Asian Authority
- Male Authority
- Female Authority

Internal consistencies for this measure across different contexts have been reported to range from .86 to .89 (Harter et al., 1998). In the present study, Cronbach alphas ranged from .82 to .90. Convergent validity was also established in a separate study by Johnson (as cited in Harter et al., 1998, p. 895) where participants were asked to generate six behaviors describing themselves in different social contexts (i.e., with parents, male friends, female friends, classmates and teachers). The attributes generated could be considered "high" or "low" voice behaviors. Some examples of "high voice" characteristics included "talkative," "argumentative," "assertive," "being myself," etc. while examples of "low voice" included "quiet," "keep thoughts to myself," "not completely honest," and "not being 'me.'" The participants were then categorized as either a high or low voice group based on their responses. Participants' scores on the voice measure were then compared by group. Scores on the measure were found to be in the expected directions (i.e., "high voice" group scored higher in the voice measure while those in the "low voice" group scored lower) and differences in voice scores between the two groups were significant across each context.

Construct validity has also been established in previous studies by asking participants to rate whether items on the questionnaire represented false self-behaviors (Harter et al., 1998). For example, participants were asked which of two statements was most true of themselves (e.g., "When I don't say what I am thinking around [certain persons], I feel

like I am not being the 'real me" vs. "When I don't say what I am thinking around [certain persons], I feel like I am being the 'real me"). The researchers were interested in determining whether the items on the voice measure assessed inauthenticity versus other reasons for not voicing one's thoughts (e.g., socially inappropriate, shy temperament, need for privacy, etc.). It was found that lack of voice, as measured by the voice instrument, was associated with inauthenticity and false self-behavior.

**Perceived support for voice in relational context**. A measure that tapped into the extent to which participants perceived support for voice across different relational contexts (Harter et al., 1998) was used in the study. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they felt that others listen to them and take them seriously, showed that they want to hear what they have to say, tried to understand the participants' point of view, etc. Internal consistencies have been reported to range from .88 to .92 across the different contexts. Cronbach alphas for the present sample ranged from .83 to .90. As with the previous measure, the contexts of this questionnaire were adapted for this study by reflecting the same eight contexts specified in the voice measure. Each of the eight contexts also consisted of five items (i.e., total measure consisted of a total of 40 items).

**Culture and self-construal**. To date no known reliable measure for communication style exists. However, because communication style has been associated with how one relates to others (i.e., group oriented vs. self oriented) and with culture (i.e., Asian vs. Western) (Kim, 2002; Singelis & Brown, 1995), the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) was selected as a measure for cultural values and related communication style. Self-construal, specifically *interdependent* and *independent* self-construal, has been tied to *high* and *low* context communication styles, respectively (Gudykunst et al., 1996;

Singelis & Brown, 1995) and has been found to be a good predictor of communication style (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Additionally, Singelis (1994) found that those with higher scores in interdependence (vs. those with higher scores in independence) were more likely to put greater emphasis on situational factors. This finding is consistent with the literature on high vs. low context communication (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Dsilva & Whyte, 1998). That is, those who have high context style of communication (which is associated with collectivistic cultures) tend to communicate indirectly and are sensitive to the contextual factors (e.g., power and hierarchy) and those with have low context communication style, tend to be more direct in their communication and rely less on social context.

The 24-item questionnaire measured the two dimensions of self-construal (i.e., independent and interdependent selves). This measure was created by Singelis (1994) and based on Markus and Kitayama's (1991) conceptualization of self-construal. The items on this scale were developed from previous instruments' measuring of individualism and collectivism and originally contained 45 items. Singelis (1994) later shortened this measure after factor analyses were conducted and items not loading highly (greater than 0.35) on either of the two factors were dropped, resulting in a 24-item instrument.

Construct validity was tested by comparing the scores of Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans (Singelis, 1994); results were in the expected directions and were consistent with Markus and Kitayama's description of Asians as more interdependent and North Americans as more independent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Predictive validity was also established by comparing the scores of the SCS with scores on perceptions of

situational influence in two scenarios. As expected, the interdependence scale was found to be positively associated with the degree to which situational attributions were made.

Participants in the current study were asked to rate statements corresponding to independent and interdependent self-concepts on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." Interdependent items included statements such as "It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group," "If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible," and "I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor." Independent items included: "I'd rather say "no" directly than risk being misunderstood," "I am the same person at home as I am at school," and "I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects." Participants were scored for both the strength of their independent selves as well as their interdependent selves given that Singelis (1994) found that these two aspects of the self were separate factors, rather than opposite poles in a single construct.

The measure has been used widely on Asian and Non-Asian populations, both in the U.S. and internationally, with reported alphas ranging from .50 to .85 (Bresnahan, Levine, Shearman, Lee, Park, Kiyomiya, 2005; Lam, 2005; Ozawa, Crosby, & Crosby, 1996; Singelis, 1994). In this sample, alphas were good: .74 for interdependent scale and .73 for independent.

**Racism-related stress.** The Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (AARRSI; Liang et al., 2004) is a 29-item measure assessed experiences of racism and race-related stress. The measure, which was developed specifically to assess the racial experiences of Asian Americans, includes three subscales: (a) Socio-Historical Racism (14 items), (b) General Racism (8 items), and (c) Perpetual Foreigner Racism (7 items).

Each subscale consists of a list of possible racial events that participants rate on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 ("This never happened to me or anyone I know") to 5 (This event happened and I was extremely upset"). Reliability coefficients were reported to be .91, .85, .77, and .85 for the total 29-items on the AARRSI, Socio-Historical Racism subscale, General Racism subscale, and Perpetual Foreigner subscale, respectively. Test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .87 to .93 for the total scale (Liang et al., 2004). For the current sample, Cronbach alpha coefficients were .90, .88, .85, and .95 for the Socio-Historical Racism subscale, General Racism subscale, Perpetual Foreigner subscale, and total 29-items on the AARRSI, respectively.

**Psychological adjustment.** Wellbeing was accessed using the Brief Symptom Inventory 18 (BSI-18, Derogatis, 2001) and self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE, Rosenberg, 1965).

***Psychological wellbeing.*** The Brief symptom Inventory 18 (BSI-18) is an 18-item symptom checklist, developed as a highly sensitive screening tool for psychological distress and psychiatric disorders (Derogatis, 2001). The BSI-18 was derived from previously validated instruments (i.e., the Brief Symptom Inventory and it's parent instrument, The Hopkins Symptom Checkist). The BSI-18 is designed for use with adults 18 years and older and for both clinical (i.e., broad range of medical patients) and community populations (Derogatis, 2001). Internal consistencies were reported as .74, 0.84, and 0.79 for the somatization, depression and anxiety subscales, respectively. Internal consistency for the total score (i.e., Global Symptom Index) was reported as .89. Cronbach alpha coefficients for this sample were .81, .89, .86, and .92 for somatization, depression, anxiety, and the Global symptom index, respectively.

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they were distressed by psychological symptoms in the last 7 days. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0, "Not at all" to 4, "Extremely." Items on the BSI-18 reflected symptoms of somatization, depression and anxiety, such as: "Faintness or dizziness," "Feeling hopeless about the future," and "Nervousness or shakiness inside." Participants' raw scores for each subscale were converted to T-Scores based on the established norms for adult females in the non-medical (i.e., community) population.

***Self-esteem.*** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE, Rosenberg, 1965) is a widely used 10-item measure of an individual's self-worth. Participants were asked to rate statements such as "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on any equal basis with others" on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." Alpha coefficients have been reported to range from .72 to .88 (Vispoel, Boo, Bleiler, 2001). For the sample in this study, the alpha coefficient was .91, which indicated a high internal consistency.

**Analyses**

***Sample demographics.*** The present sample consisted of 190 women, 18 years or older, who self-identified as Asian American. Ages ranged from 18 to 57 ($M = 28$, $SD = 8.1$). The majority of the participants were under the age of 30 (71.6%). The next largest age group was 31 to 45 years old (25.3%). Participants over the age of 45 made up only 3.2% of the sample.

The vast majority of the participants were East Asian (72.1%). Other Asian groups included Southeast Asians (14.7%), South Asian (1.6%). Participants identifying as a member of multiple Asian groups or who were multiracial consisted of 11.6% of the

sample. Almost half of the sample identified themselves as Chinese (46.3), followed by Koreans (14.2%) and those who were multiethnic (12.1%).

Participants consisted mainly of those who were born in or grew up in the U.S. as a child. Those identifying as second generation American (i.e., born in the U.S. to immigrant parents) made up 59.5% of the sample, followed by those identifying as 1.5 generation American (i.e., immigrated to the U.S. before age 13) who made up 24.7% of the sample. First generation Americans (i.e., came to the U.S. at age 13 or older) consisted of 6.3% and 7.8% were 3rd generation or more. In this sample three participants (1.6%) did not indicate a generational status because they were adopted.

The participants were highly educated with 44.2% having at least a college degree and 30.6% earned either a graduate or professional degree. Income was somewhat evenly distributed with 26.3% of household incomes under $30,000, 32.1% earning between $30,000 and $74,000, and 25.3% with income over $75,000. The remaining participants (16.3%) did not give income information.

The highest percentage of participants was from the Western part of the U.S. (40%), followed by those in the Northeast (35.8%), Southern U.S. (12.6%), and the Midwest (10%). Two participants (1.1%) indicated that they were not currently living in the U.S.

Most participants learned about the study through the Internet. Nearly half of the participants were directed to the study from a site focused on Asian American issues called Angry Asian Man (43.7%). Other participants were recruited through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (23.2%), word of mouth (12.1%), email (8.4%), a blog called More than Serving Tea (2.6%), The National Association of Asian

American Professionals (1.6%), and listservs (1.1%). Participants who selected "other" as a source of recruitment (7.4%) indicated various Asian American blogs and websites (e.g., Asian Nation, Reappropriate, Fascinasians, etc.). Detailed information about the participant characteristics can be found in Table 1.

**Primary Analyses**

Main analyses are described below by research question.

**Voice and wellbeing.** Two simple regressions were conducted to elucidate the relationship between voice and self-esteem and voice and psychological distress. In these regressions, voice was entered as the predictor of self-esteem and psychological distress. It was hypothesized that higher levels of voice were associated with both higher self-esteem and lower psychological distress and lower levels of voice were associated with lower self-esteem and higher levels of psychological distress.

**Voice and culture.** In order to examine how culture was related to voice, two separate regressions were conducted with the self-construal scores as predictor variables and total voice score as the criterion variable. It was expected that higher independent scores would be associated with higher levels of voice while higher interdependent scores would be associated with lower scores in voice.

**Voice in social different contexts.** In order to examine whether there were differences in level of voice across social contexts, a repeated measures ANOVA was run with social context as the within participant variable and voice as the criterion variable. Post hoc tests (i.e., Bonferroni) were conducted to determine the relationship between voice and context. The goal of these analyses was to examine specifically the following hypotheses: (a) Voice will vary across social contexts; (b) Higher levels of voice will

occur in the peer, Asian, and female contexts; and (c) Lower levels of voice will occur in the authority, non-Asian, and male contexts.

**Perceived support for voice in different contexts.** Similarly, a repeated measures ANOVA was run to determine if there were significant differences in perceived support for voice in the different social contexts. In this analysis, social context was again entered as the predictor variable and perceived support for voice as the criterion variable. The relationship between scores for perception of support for voice in each context was also assessed by the Bonferroni post hoc test. For this analysis, it was predicted that within each of the social contexts, perceived support for voice varied across contexts and that perceived support for voice would be higher in the female, Asian and peer contexts but lower in the male, non-Asian, and authority contexts.

**Racism-related stress and level of voice.** The relationship between racism-related stress and level of voice was examined through a regression, with the AARRSI total score (i.e., racism-related distress) as the predictor and total voice score as the criterion variable.

The AARRSI total score was entered again in separate regressions as the predictor of the voice scores in each social context. It was expected that higher discrimination distress would be associated with lower levels of voice, particularly in race salient contexts.

**The relationship between perceived support for voice and level of voice.** Correlations between perceived support for voice and voice behavior scores were obtained to examine the relationships between these two variables within each social

context; specifically, these analyses confirmed whether or not higher perceived support for voice is related to greater levels of voice.

# Chapter 4 (Results)

## Preliminary Analyses

Prior to data analysis, surveys were examined for missing responses. To be included in the study, participants must have completed the demographics survey and both the "voice" and "support for voice" measures. Additionally, surveys that do not meet the minimum number of responses for valid scores (i.e., more than 20% missing responses) were excluded from the analyses. After excluding invalid surveys (as described above), data was examined for outliers. For any results that included influential outliers, the results with outliers removed were reported; however, both results (i.e., with and without outliers) were included in the tables. An outlier was considered influential if it changed results of the study (i.e., whether results were significant or not).

Preliminary analyses were also conducted to determine whether the data met the assumption of normality for general lineal model analyses. Model assumptions were verified through the examination of residual plots and histograms.

## Primary Analyses

Primary analyses were conducted using regressions, repeated measures ANOVAs and Pearson correlations in order to examine the experience of voice for Asian American women across different social contexts. Results were organized by research question.

**Question 1: Is there a relationship between voice and wellbeing?** In order to examine the relationship between voice and wellbeing, separate regressions were conducted using total voice score as the predictor variable and the wellbeing measures (i.e., BSI-18 and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) as criterion variables.

A significant regression equation was found for voice and self-esteem ($F(1, 179) = 63.424$, $p < .001$), with $R^2$ of .262. Subjects' self-esteem score was significantly predicted by voice ($\beta$=.511, $p < .001$). Self-esteem scores increased by 7.17 with higher voice scores (Self-esteem = -.575 + 7.17 (total voice score)). See Table 2.

Significant equations were also found for each of the subscales of the BSI-18 as well as for the Global Symptom index. Level of voice significantly predicted somatization scores ($\beta$ = - .310, $p < .001$). Somatization ($F(1, 179) = 19.007$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .096$), decreased with each unit increase in total voice score (Somatization = 71.282 – 6.890(total voice)). See Table 3. Likewise, depression scores were predicted by voice ($\beta = -.387$, $p < .001$). Depression ($F(1, 179) = 31.454$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .149$), decreased with each unit increase in total voice score (Depression = 81.129 – 9.149(total voice)). See Table 4. Anxiety was also significantly predicted by level of voice ($\beta = -.323$, $p < .001$). Anxiety ($F(1, 179) = 20.784$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .104$), decreased with each unit increase in total voice score (Anxiety = 78.874 – 7.753(total voice)). See Table 5. Finally, voice score significantly predicted overall psychological distress on the Global Symptom Index ($\beta = -.370$, $p < .001$). Global Symptom Index ($F(1, 179) = 28.333$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .137$), decreased with each unit increase in total voice score (GSI score = 81.558 – 9.162(total voice)). See Table 6.

In sum, results suggested that voice was associated with higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of psychological distress (i.e., somatization, depression, and anxiety).

**Question 2: What is the relationship between voice and culture?** In order to examine the relationship between voice and culture, two separate regressions were

conducted for each self-construal score (i.e., interdependent and independent scores) using voice as the predictor variable and self-construal score as criterion variable.

A significant equation was found for interdependent self-construal ($F(1, 181) = 5.680$, $p = .018$; $R^2 = .030$). Level of voice significantly predicted interdependent self-construal scores ($\beta = -.174$, $p = .018$). Participants' average interdependent self-construal scores decreased with increase in voice scores (Interdependent Self-construal = 5.698 - .290(total voice)). See Table 7.

A significant equation was also found for independent self-construal ($F(1, 181) = 46.710$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .205$). Independent self-construal scores were significantly predicted by voice ($\beta = .453$, $p < .001$). High independent self-construal mean scores were associated with high voice scores (Independent Self-Construal = 2.356 + .806(total voice). See Table 8.

Results were consistent with hypotheses; that is, higher levels of voice were associated with higher independent self-construal scores. Conversely, high levels of voice were associated with low interdependent self-construal scores.

**Question 3: Does level of voice vary across different social contexts?** A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if voice behaviors varied in different social contexts. In this analysis, social context was entered as the within participant variable and voice as the criterion variable.

Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, $\chi^2(35) = 198.63$, $p < .001$, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity ($\varepsilon = 0.80$). Results showed that voice scores varied significantly

by social contexts ($F(69.71, 405.48) = 31.46$, $p < .001$). See Table 9 for mean voice scores by context.

***The Bonferroni post hoc test.*** The Bonferroni post hoc test was conducted to identify the nature of the differences. In general, the results supported the hypotheses. The highest level of voice occurred in the peer contexts and the lowest levels of voice occurred in the authority contexts. The results of the Bonferroni post hoc tests that were found to be significant were as follows.

*Peer context.* In the peer setting, highest levels of voice occurred among Asian peers, followed by female peers, male peers and non-Asian peers. Pairwise comparisons between peer contexts revealed a significant difference in level of voice between the following peer contexts: male and Asian peers (means 2.92 and 3.13, respectively; $p = .003$); female and non-Asian peers (means 3.05 and 2.84, respectively; $p = .003$); Asian and non-Asian peers (means 3.13 and 2.84, respectively; $p < .001$). These results were consistent with hypotheses (i.e., higher levels of voice in Asian, female contexts; lower levels of voice in the male and non-Asian contexts).

*Authority context.* In the authority contexts, the highest levels of voice occurred with female authority, followed by non-Asian Authority, Asian Authority, and male authority. Pairwise comparisons between authority contexts revealed significant differences between male authority and female authority ($p < .001$) and between male authority and non-Asian authority ($p = .001$), in both cases, voice scores were lower with male authority contexts. There were no significant differences between the other authority contexts. Significant results of the pairwise comparisons (i.e., voice by context) are summarized in Table 10.

**Question 4: Does perceived support for voice vary across different social contexts?** A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if perceived support for voice varied in different social contexts. In this analysis, social context was entered as the within participant variable and perceived support for voice as the criterion variable. Prior to the analyses, influential outliers were found and all outliers were removed. Results both with and without outliers showed that perceived support for voice varied significantly across social contexts. In pairwise comparisons, however, some of the outliers affected the results. A summary of both means (i.e., with and without outliers) for perceived support for voice by context are reported in Tables 11 and 12.

Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2(35) = 261.13$, $p < .001$, therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity ($\varepsilon = 0.72$). Results showed that perceived support for voice varied significantly by social contexts ($F(42.06, 221.21) = 32.14$, $p < .001$).

**The Bonferroni post hoc test.** Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction revealed the nature of the differences. In general, perceived support for voice appeared to be higher in the peer settings compared to the authority settings. The results reported below do not include influential outliers. A summary of both results of the pairwise comparisons (i.e., with and without outliers) can be found in Tables 13 and 14.

*Peer context.* In the peer setting, the highest levels of perceived support for voice occurred among female peers (3.31), followed by Asian (3.20), non-Asian (3.06), and male peers (2.94). Pairwise comparisons between peer contexts revealed a significant difference in level of perceived support for voice between the following peer contexts:

male and female peers ($p < .001$); male and Asian peers ($p < .001$); male and non-Asian peers ($p = .014$); female and non-Asian peers ($p < .001$); and Asian and Non-Asian Peers ($p = .036$). These results were consistent with hypotheses (i.e., higher levels of perceived support for voice in Asian and female contexts; lower levels of perceived support for voice in the male and non-Asian contexts).

*Authority context.* In the authority contexts, the highest levels of perceived support for voice occurred with female authority (3.06), followed by non-Asian Authority (2.92), Male Authority (2.81), and Asian authority (2.76). These results for perceived support for voice were consistent with the results for level of voice in the authority contexts (i.e., followed the same order). Pairwise comparisons between authority contexts revealed significant differences between male authority and female authority ($p < .001$), Male and Non-Asian Authority ($p = .011$), and female and Asian authority ($p < .001$). There were no significant differences between the other authority contexts.

**Question 5: What is the relationship between voice and racism-related stress?** In order to examine the relationship between voice and racism-related stress, separate regressions were conducted using voice score as the criteron variable and total AARRSI score as the predictor variable. A simple linear regression was conducted to predict participants' overall voice scores based on scores on the AARRSI. The regression was not significant ($F(1, 178) = 2.467$, $p = .118$; $R^2 = .014$). Participants' total voice scores did not predict their overall score on racism-related stress ($\beta = -.117$, $p = .118$). See Table 15.

Although there were no significant findings in the overall scores, separate regressions were run to predict voice scores for each of the eight social contexts based on

the total AARRSI score. Of the eight social contexts, non-Asian peer ($F(1, 178) = 10.824$, $p = .001$; $R^2 = .057$) and Male Authority ($F(1, 178) = 4.226$, $p = .041$; $R^2 = .023$) contexts were significant. For all other social contexts, there was no significant finding (i.e., cannot predict voice score in those contexts based on discrimination distress scores). A summary of these results by context can be found in Tables 16 - 23.

In the non-Asian peer context, participants' AARRSI scores predicted level of voice ($\beta = -.239$, $p = .001$). Specifically, voice scores decreased with increased scores in racism-related stress in the non-Asian peer context (Voice in non-Asian Peer context = 3.457 - .196 (total discrimination distress).

In the male authority context, participants' voice scores were also predicted by racism-related stress ($\beta = -.152$, $p = .041$). Specifically, voice scores decreased with increased scores in the AARRSI in the male authority context (Voice in Male authority context = 2.865 - .127 (total discrimination distress). These results suggested that in settings with male authority and with non-Asian peers, the experience of racism-related stress may be associated with lower levels of voice.

**Question 6: Is there a relationship between voice and perceived support for voice?** To address the question about the relationship between voice and perceived support for voice, correlations between these two variables were conducted within each social context. Because influential outliers were found, results both with and without outliers are summarized in Tables 24 and 25.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between "voice" and "perceived support for voice" within each social context. A significant positive relationship was found in all eight social contexts and the total score between

voice behavior and perceived support for voice. Correlations ranged from .425 to .699 ($p < .001$). In other words, perceived support for voice within a specific context was positively correlated with voice behaviors in that context. These results were consistent with the literature on voice and authenticity (Gilligan, 1993; Harter et al., 1998); that is, feeling heard and validated appears to be an important part of creating a context that is conducive to voice.

# Chapter 5 (Discussion)

The concept of "voice" for women in general has been examined extensively in the extant research; however, little is known about the experience of voice for Asian American women specifically. This study empirically tested the role of certain factors that have been thought to allow or inhibit Asian American women's voice. Based on previous literature, the factors included in the present study were: gender, culture and communication style, experiences of racial discrimination, and sensitivity to power and status. Additionally, this study examined the relationship between voice and wellbeing, as well as the role of perceived support for voice in encouraging these women to speak freely and authentically.

## Summary of Findings

Overall, the results of this preliminary examination of voice for Asian American women were consistent with study hypotheses; however, further research would be necessary to clarify in more detail the current results. The findings of the study are summarized in the next section by research question.

**The relationship between voice and wellbeing.** The link between voice and wellbeing has been well established in the literature. The suppression of one's thoughts, emotions and opinions have been associated with depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders and other psychological distress (Flett et al., 2007; Gratch et al., 1995; Harter et al., 1998; Hurst & Beesley, 2013; Impett et al., 2008; Jack, 1991; Jack & Ali, 2010; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002; Theran, 2010; Theran, 2011).

The current study specifically examined the associations between voice and self-esteem (as measured by the Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale), and between voice and

psychological distress (as measured by the Brief Symptom Inventory-18). In this study, it was found that voice was significantly associated with all of the measures for wellbeing used in the study. Specifically, self-esteem scores increased with higher levels of voice. Likewise, higher levels of voice were significantly associated with lower levels of psychological distress (i.e., depression, anxiety, somatization, and global symptom index). These results were consistent with previous research linking voice with better health outcomes. While some studies have revealed cultural differences in the relationship between voice and wellbeing (Carr et al., 1996; Soto et al., 2011), others have found that voice was associated with wellbeing across ethnic groups and cultures (Gratch et al., 1995; Grant et al., 2011; Jack & Ali, 2010; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Roberts et al., 2008). While the current study did not examine cross-cultural differences, it provides evidence that at least for the population of Asian American women surveyed, higher voice scores were indeed associated with better psychological wellbeing and self-esteem. Additional research should be done to confirm causality, as it is unclear whether higher voice leads to positive wellbeing and self-esteem, or vice versa.

**The relationship between voice and self-construal.** While, to date, there is no known measure of communication style available, researchers have found that self-construal was a good predictor of culture and the tendency toward a particular communication style (Singelis & Brown, 1995). Self-construal has been described as the way in which a person sees him/herself in relation to others; and it is thought to be influenced by culture. These aspects of culture and self-orientation, in turn, shape behaviors such as communication style. While the self-construals that were examined in this study (i.e., interdependent and independent styles) appear to be on opposite ends of a

continuum, it was determined in previous research that these two styles of self-construal represent two separate factors (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Therefore, they were examined separately in the current study.

The findings supported the study hypotheses; that is, decreases in interdependent self-construal scores were associated with increases in voice scores. Moreover, increases in independent self-construal scores were associated with increased levels of voice. These results were consistent with literature on cross-cultural communication (i.e., interdependent cultures value listening over speaking, while independent cultures tend to emphasize speaking).

**Does level of voice vary by context?** It is a commonly held belief that one's behaviors often vary depending on context (e.g., being quiet at the library, being more outspoken at a party). In this vein, previous research suggests that there are a variety of contexts that may be more or less conducive to voice (Harter et al., 1998; Neff & Harter 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2003; Robinson et al., 2012; Sheldon et al., 1997). These contexts include settings where there are differences in power, gender and race. Additionally, many Asian cultures are sensitive to social context and individuals from those cultures may act in ways that maintain social order and harmony. For these reasons, it was hypothesized that level of voice would vary depending on the social context. For Asian American women, it was hypothesized that the following conditions would be less conducive to voice—those characterized by the presence of authority figures, men and non-Asians. In contrast, Asian American women were expected to indicate greater voice in settings with peers, other women and other Asians, due to the lack of power differentials in these contexts.

The results of the study confirmed that level of voice did indeed vary by social context and that overall, the highest levels of voice were found in the peer setting. Also, as expected, the lowest levels of voice were found in the authority contexts. The results from the peer and authority contexts are discussed separately below.

***Peer contexts.*** In examining the mean voice scores in the peer contexts, the highest levels of voice were found in the Asian and female peer contexts while the lowest levels of voice were found in the male and non-Asian contexts. While caution should be taken in drawing conclusions from these means alone, the order of the social contexts (i.e., from highest to lowest level of voice) was consistent with hypotheses, namely that the highest level of voice would occur in the Asian and Female contexts while the lowest level of voice would occur in the male and non-Asian contexts.

Pairwise comparisons demonstrated that voice was significantly lower in the male peer context when compared to Asian peers. Voice was also significantly lower with non-Asian peers when compared with female peers. While these results were consistent with hypotheses, a barrier to drawing strong, meaningful conclusions is the overlap in the social contexts. For example, "Asian peers" could include both males and females and "female peers" could include non-Asians as well as Asians. Thus, it is not possible to definitively know whether gender, race, or both gender and race, played a role in the level of voice. Future research delineating and isolating these specific social contexts would help to clarify these results. Nevertheless, one result was fairly straightforward and consistent with study hypotheses: voice in the non-Asian peer context was significantly lower than voice in the Asian peer context.

***Authority contexts.*** As for the authority context results, the highest level of voice occurred with female authority, followed by non-Asian authority, Asian Authority, and Male Authority, respectively. Note that this overall order was consistent with hypotheses, except for the higher voice mean score for non-Asian Authority vs. Asian authority—however, the difference between these two means was not significant.

Pairwise comparisons showed that voice was significantly lower in the male authority context compared to female authority, which is consistent with study hypothesis. Voice was also significantly lower in the male authority context compared to non-Asian authority. This result may suggest that gender may be more salient than race in the authority context; however, the overlap in context makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions. For example, both males and females may be included in the non-Asian authority context.

**Does support for voice vary by context?** The research on women's development and voice have pointed to the importance of valuing and encouraging authentic expression of one's perspectives and feelings (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Harter, 1997; Harter et al., 1998; Jack, 1995; Jordan, 2004). That is, feeling supported and empowered to speak one's mind seems crucial to voice. Given that level of voice may vary by social context, it was hypothesized that perceived support for voice would also vary by context. The results of the study confirmed that perceived support for voice was significantly different across social settings.

Similar to the results examining level of voice in different social contexts, the highest scores in perceived support for voice were found in the peer contexts while the

lowest levels were found in the authority contexts. The peer and authority contexts will be discussed separately below.

***Peer contexts.*** Among the peer contexts, the mean scores for perceived support for voice was highest in the female context, followed by Asian, non-Asian, and male peer contexts (highest voice to lowest voice, respectively). These results were consistent with hypotheses.

Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between male and female peers with perceived support for voice significantly lower in the male context. Perceived support for voice was also significantly lower in the male peer context compared to non-Asian peers. Finally, perceived support for voice was significantly lower in the non-Asian peer context when compared with both female and Asian peers. These results suggest that Asian American women may feel less supported when in the presence of males and non-Asian peers and more supported with female and Asian peers. These results were expected, based on previous research on gender, race issues and culture.

***Authority Contexts.*** In the authority contexts, perceived support for voice was highest with female authority, followed by non-Asian authority, male authority and Asian authority, respectively. Pairwise comparisons found that perceived support for voice was significantly lower with male authority compared with female authority. Male authority was also perceived to be less supportive of voice compared to non-Asian authority, which may, again, suggest the possibility that gender may be more salient in influencing voice (although caution should be taken in drawing firm conclusions due to the overlap in social contexts in the non-Asian Authority setting). Interestingly, these results mirror the

results in level of voice (i.e., level of voice was significantly lower in the male authority context than in the non-Asian Authority context).

That female authority figures were seen as more supportive of voice than male authority was not surprising and was consistent with hypotheses and previous research on gender issues. However, mean scores for support for voice were lowest with Asian authority figures, which contradicted the study hypotheses. Additionally, in pairwise comparisons, perceived support for voice in the Asian authority context was significantly lower compared to female authority. It is possible that the Asian authority context may have triggered certain cultural expectations (e.g., perceived expectation to respect hierarchy and status common in Asian cultures) and/or stereotypes. For example, Asian American authority figures may be perceived as benevolent but paternalistic (Burris et al., 2013—a leadership style that has been linked to lower levels of voice in employees (Chan, 2014). Further research would be necessary to clarify the results in this study.

**Relationship between voice and racism-related stress.** Previous research on racial discrimination has revealed that experiences of racial discrimination may lead to self-silencing as a way to cope with situations that may feel threatening (Cheung, 1993; Housee, 2010; Shih et al., 2013). Therefore, it was expected that higher scores in racism-related stress, as measured by the AARRSI, would be associated with lower levels of voice.

In this study, there was not a significant association between total racism-related stress scores and total voice scores (i.e., overall voice across all contexts). However, when the social contexts were examined individually, level of voice was found to decrease significantly in the male authority and non-Asian peer contexts with increases in

racism-related stress scores. These findings appear to offer additional support to the hypothesis that context matters. Additionally, results in the peer setting support the hypothesis that racism-related stress would be associated with lower levels of voice when race is salient. Interestingly, levels of voice decreased significantly in the male authority context with increases in racism-related distress. Although it is difficult to determine why there was a significant relationship despite the explicit absence of race in the social context, it is possible that participants may have envisioned an European American male authority figure specifically when given the context "male authority" due to the large percentage of European American males in leadership roles and in positions of authority (Eagly & Chin, 2010). The results were also surprising in that there was no significant associations between racism-related stress and levels of voice in the non-Asian authority context. Perhaps the results may be related to that lack of specificity in the category "Non-Asian." For example, participants may have included people of color as "non-Asian" which may possibly lessen the association between racism-related stress and voice due to the shared history of oppression in this country and the assumption of solidarity among people of color. Future studies should clarify these results with more specific social contexts.

**Relationship between voice and support for voice.** Research on voice and women's development often link self-silencing to a history of not being heard (Ayvazian & Tatum, 2004; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Harter, 1996; Jack, 1995; Jordan, 2004;). That is, settings and relationships that foster authentic expression would naturally create an environment where one feels safe to speak up. In this study, the association between voice and perceived support for voice was examined. The results

demonstrated that in all eight social contexts, perceived support for voice was positively correlated with voice. Thus, higher perceived support for voice was correlated with higher levels of voice. These results support the research on women's development and voice in that settings that encourage voice are more conducive to voice.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

Although the construct of voice has been explored extensively in women, much of the literature centers on the experiences of European American women and little is known about the issue of voice for Asian American women, specifically. Other studies have examined voice among other minority populations, but these studies focused primarily on African American women (Taylor et al., 1995; Theran, 2009; Way, 1995). Scholars have attributed the lack of research on Asian Americans to the myth of "the model minority," which depicts this population as relatively successful and problem-free (Liang et al., 2004; Sue et al., 2009; Suzuki, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). The present study addresses this gap in the literature by examining the issue of voice specifically for Asian American women. However, because the study is a preliminary examination of the different social contexts that may or may not be conducive to voice for this population, much still remains unknown about the process of voice and silencing for Asian American women.

**Research implications.** The study examined the social contexts where race, gender and power tend to be salient features. The results of the study suggested that social context may help determine whether or not Asian American women voice their thoughts and perspectives (i.e., level of voice did vary depending on social contexts); however, the reasons behind these differences in voice remains to be explored. The study

also highlights the complicated nature of voice given the multiple factors that might influence voice for Asian American women. The following sections will outline some of the areas that require further examination.

***Gender issues.*** In the current study, both voice and perceived support for voice were found to be consistently lower in the male contexts compared to the female contexts; however, the study did not explain why there were differences in voice in these contexts. It is possible that being in a context where gender is more prominent may create more pressure to conform to gender norms, which can lead to self-silencing (Gilligan, 1993). Exploring the relationship between conformity to gender roles and voice in these gendered contexts may help to provide an explanation for the differences in voice in these gendered contexts. Furthermore, for Asian American women, it may be possible that adherence to specific cultural values (e.g., defined roles and prescribed behaviors for women in Confucianism) may further compel these women to remain silent given their roles as women. Future studies exploring these gender role factors may help to confirm previous research and expand the knowledge on relationship between gender issues and voice for Asian American women.

To better differentiate cultural and gender issues that may play a role in voice, replicating the study with Asian American men may provide some insights into the silencing process (e.g., do Asian American men and women have similar or different voice experiences across contexts? How might the differences and similarities be explained?). A comparative study with Asian American men would also add to the existing literature on gender differences in voice and self-silencing which, thus far, has yielded inconsistent results.

***Racial issues and voice.*** A number of studies have suggested that racism and microaggressions can result in self-silencing as a way to protect oneself in a hostile environment. The results of the present study suggested that experiences of higher racism-related stress (which included experiences of microaggressions) inhibited voice in certain contexts. Furthermore, it appeared that context was an important determining factor in whether one voiced their perspectives or inhibited them; that is, racism-related stress scores did not predict overall voice scores but when social contexts were examined separately, it was found that higher racism-related stress was significantly associated with lower level of voice with non-Asian peers and male authority figures.

While it was not clear why the results were significant in the male authority context given that race was not explicit in that context, it may suggest that experiences of racism might have produced a heightened sense of vulnerability in contexts where power was doubly represented (i.e., authority figure, male). Moreover, it was also possible that the research participants might have envisioned European American male authority figures in this context. Further research would clarify these results using more specifically defined social contexts. Additionally, a qualitative study exploring the role of racial issues in hindering or encouraging voice in different contexts may further elucidate these findings.

Although there has been much research on the effects of stereotypes and stereotype threat on the behaviors of marginalized groups, little research has explored how these issues may influence voice for Asian American women, specifically. Previous studies have found that stereotypes do shape behaviors in Asian American women (Gibson et al., 2014; Shih, Ambady, Richeson, Fujita, & Gray, 2002; Shih, Pittinsky, &

Ambady, 1999; Sinclair et al., 2006). For example, several studies have found that stereotypes of Asian Americans as "math geniuses" and females as being verbally skilled have influenced the behaviors (i.e., math performance vs. test of verbal ability) of Asian American women, depending on which stereotype was primed (Gibson et al., 2014; Shih, Ambady, Richeson, Fujita, & Gray, 2002; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999; Sinclair et al., 2006). Another study found that the "model minority" stereotype resulted in lower math performance and difficulty concentrating, presumably due to "choking under the pressure" to conform to the stereotyped expectations (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). These studies suggested that stereotypes could play a role in influencing behaviors and that these behaviors can be primed simply by asking the research participant to identify their race/ethnicity or sex (Sinclair et al., 2006); thus, it is possible that Asian American women's level of voice may be more affected the by the "quiet and submissive Asian female" stereotype in social contexts that bring race/ethnicity to awareness (i.e., race salient contexts). To date, there have not been any studies that examined the relationship between the stereotypes of being "quiet" and "submissive" and voice behaviors, specifically. Future studies on the relationship between these stereotypes of Asian American females and self-silencing may help to uncover some of the racial aspects of voice and may also help to explain the lower numbers of Asian American women in leadership positions (i.e., disengagement from certain careers and domains).

Additionally, future research on the consequences of counterstereotypical behaviors on voice for Asian American women could help to further our understanding of the silencing process for this population and extend the existing literature on backlash effects. Research on backlash effects have found that individuals who do not fit

stereotypes were perceived more negatively and often faced sanctions. While the majority of research on counterstereotypical behavior and backlash has focused on women and has not included Asian Americans, one recent study did find that Asian Americans who behaved in counterstereotypical ways (i.e., confident, assertive, sociable and warm) faced greater racial harassment in the workplace (Berdahl & Min, 2012); however, it did not explore the consequences of experiencing backlash for defying stereotypes. Thus, little remains known about how the experience of backlash for countersteretypical behaviors could lead to silencing for Asian American women; however, it stands to reason that given the negative consequences for acting in ways that counter racial expectations, experiences of backlash could serve to silence this population. Exploring these racial issues and its potential impact on voice may also help to explain some of the reasons why greater levels of voice may be associated with certain contexts over others, especially given possible past experiences of silencing in certain contexts.

***Power and voice.*** In this study, the level of voice varied based on the explicit and implicit presence of power. For example, the overall results of the study showed that lower levels of voice tended to occur in contexts where there were implied power differences (e.g., authority, males) while higher levels of voice tended to occur in contexts where there were presumably less power differences (e.g., females, peers). Although these findings were in line with the research on co-cultural and muted groups theories (Orbe, 1998) as well as the literature on Asian cultures and communication styles (i.e., behaviors are highly dependent on social status and hierarchy as well as social context), the reasons behind these variations in voice remain unclear. Because many Asian cultures place an importance on respecting status and hierarchy, one useful

construct that might help to explain why power might influence voice is social dominance orientation or the degree to which one believes in having a social hierarchy (Islam & Zyphur, 2005). Someone with a high social dominance orientation may believe that society is inherently hierarchical and may act accordingly; in contrast, those with a low social dominance orientation tend to view the world as more egalitarian. Future research examining the role of social dominance orientation on voice may help to further our understanding of how power influences voice.

***Support for voice.*** The study also examined the relationship between support for voice and voice. The results clearly demonstrated that support for voice was significantly correlated with level of voice within the same context. But because perceptions are often determined by previous experiences, it would be useful to examine some of the possible factors that might have influenced the perception of support for voice in these specific contexts (i.e., where race, gender, and power were salient). For example, past experiences of racism (e.g., microaggressions, being stereotyped, backlash for defying stereotypes, etc.), racial/ethnic identity and racial bias preparation (i.e., messages about race/racism from caregivers and family) may be influential in the shaping of perceived support in certain race salient settings (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). Similarly, experiences of sexism or disempowerment may shape perceptions of support in contexts that involve gender and authority figures. Examining these issues may help to provide insights into how these experiences may influence the perceived social climate in a particular setting and, ultimately, how these perceptions may influence voice.

***Voice and culture.*** Results from this study confirmed the relationship between voice and culture and were consistent with the literature on cross-cultural

communication; however, it examined only one aspect of culture (i.e., self-construal), which although it has been tied to communication style, is a fairly general cultural construct. Exploring more specific cultural values that may affect voice may help to elucidate further the cultural issues that are related to voice. For example, the degree to which an individual adheres to traditional Confucian values may be examined. Additionally, exploring both the broader and more specific aspects of some Asian cultures may help to delineate the shared and unique experiences of voice among different groups of Asian American women (e.g., some Asian cultures may not be as influenced by Confucian thought). Furthermore, the importance that Confucian values place on maintaining harmonious relationships appears to mirror the centrality of relationships for women that is emphasized in the relational-cultural theories; that is, both suggest that self-silencing is used to maintain relationships. However, the meaning and consequences of these two perspectives on self-silencing may be different. For example, in many Asian cultures maintaining harmony and avoiding conflicts through suppression of one's thoughts and emotions are seen as signs of emotional maturity (Cross et al., 2011); thus, self-silencing may be looked upon positively as characteristics of a good and emotionally healthy individual rather than being a result of oppressive forces that squelch authenticity. Some researchers have found that even in cultures that value suppression of expression, authenticity was maintained, although it was manifested differently than in individualistic cultures. For example, English & Chen (2011) found that Asian Americans were less consistent about how they described themselves across different social settings compared to their European American counterparts; however, the Asian Americans' self-descriptions were stable within the same context, over time. Thus,

cultural differences may result in alternative meanings of silence and self-silencing may not necessarily be a negative behavior with adverse consequences. While cultural aspects of self-silencing may be more straightforward when individuals are within a setting with a more homogenous culture and behaviors are congruent to the norms, the nature and meaning of self-silencing may be more complex in multicultural settings where Asian American women may be socialized in two or more cultures.

***Voice and wellbeing.*** The results of this study confirm previous research linking voice with better psychological outcomes. However, some studies have suggested that the expected negative consequences of self-silencing may not be present in situations where self-silencing is deemed appropriate and approved (e.g., inhibiting emotions and self-expression when caring for the terminally ill in order not to burden them further) and when the self-silencing is congruent to one's cultural values (Soto et al., 2011; Ussher & Perz, 2010). Future research examining the nature of self-silencing in these different situations may help to delineate the reasons for self-silencing and its influence on wellbeing. For example, one factor that might explain these differences may be whether an individual perceived the self-silencing as oppressive or considered it as a positive characteristic and/or a source of self-esteem.

***The meaning of silence.*** Much of the research on voice and silencing have been viewed through the lens of individualistic, Western cultures. Through this view, having voice is often viewed as positive and being silent is seen as a weakness or a sign of oppression (Pang, 1996). Although self-silencing has been associated with a lack of power and oppression in the research and in the culture of the United States, it may have different meanings, depending on culture and social context. For example, being silent

while with someone who is expressing emotional pain and suffering may be a way to express empathy and attentiveness to that person. Likewise, silence may be used to express respect for others and may be culturally appropriate in some situations. Silence also is not necessarily a sign of "weakness" or "passivity"—it can signify open defiance or protest as well as strength (Pang, 1996). For these reasons, research on voice (and related concepts) must consider how theories and research questions are shaped by culture and could influence policies and practices. For example, the belief that silence carries only negative consequences can inadvertently result in privileging cultures that value speaking; thus, individuals from cultures that value silence may be pushed to conform to norms that conflict with their own values since speaking up is considered "healthy" and "normal." To balance the literature and perspectives on voice, future research may explore the beneficial aspects of self-silencing.

In sum, the issue of voice for Asian American women is complex and multifaceted. While this study considered the intersections of race, gender, power, and culture and their potential influence on voice, both individually and in combination, much is still unknown about how these variables may interact with one another to influence voice. To date, there is no known empirical study that examines these intersections and their relationship to voice specifically for Asian American women. Future research may help to confirm the relationships between these factors and voice. Furthermore, research that might explain how and why silencing occurs for Asian American women would aid in theory and model building to extend our understanding of Asian American women's experience of voice.

**Implications for work and school settings.** The results of the study also have implications for work and school settings. The experience of being silenced or unheard have been found to have a number of consequences for Asian American women including negative experiences that may be detrimental to one's success in the work and school settings (Cortina & Magley, 2003; Hune, 1998; Hyun, 2005; Kawahara & Van Kirk, 2010; Pailliotet, 1997; Poon 2011). For example, being unable to speak up in work or school can result in being judged negatively, which may result in being passed over for promotions or being given a lower grade (Hune, 1998; Hyun, 2005; Kawahara & Van Kirk, 2010; Poon, 2011).

Furthermore, the silencing of Asian American women can also have negative consequences for schools and organizations as well. For example, limiting perspectives, especially those that deviate from the "norm," can also limit new ideas and progress (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Additionally, challenging existing perspectives can help facilitate new ideas leading to innovation and advancements in the field/industry/knowledge (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000); however, these counterpoints would never be heard unless there are efforts to address the "chilly climate" that often implicitly or explicitly discourages open discussion. Finally, addressing these issues may help the recruitment and maintenance of a more diverse student body and/or workforce, which may help to address both gender and racial disparities in certain fields and industries and as well as in leadership positions. (Burris et al., 2013; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Schmader et al., 2015; Woodcock et al., 2012;).

The results of this study provide some insight into what schools and workplaces can do to help facilitate voice for Asian American women. The findings of this study,

which are consistent with previous research (Harter et al., 1998; Neff & Harter 2002a; Neff & Harter, 2003; Robinson et al., 2012; Sheldon et al., 1997), indicate that context matters when it comes to voice; thus, changes in the social milieu may have an impact on whether individuals are able to share their viewpoints openly. For example, this study found that voice did vary across contexts and that in general, there were higher levels of voice in the peer setting than in the authority context. This result suggests that settings where power and hierarchy are explicit may result in less voice behaviors for Asian American women. Conversely, these women may feel freer to express their views in a more egalitarian environment.

Although it is not possible to completely remove power differentials within the work or academic setting, those in leadership positions may strive to influence the workplace culture, so that it becomes increasingly inclusive and to create a safer space for others to speak freely. For example, Edmondson (2003) found that team leaders on surgical teams who were most successful in facilitating communication and voice among team members were able to minimize concerns about power/status differentials and create psychological safety that allowed subordinates to fully participate and speak up. These leaders reduced power differences through self-disclosure of their own mistakes and learning experiences and emphasizing teamwork rather than working through a hierarchical system (Edmondson, 2003). Additionally, these types of actions from individuals in leadership positions essentially signal an openness and support for voice, which, in the present study, was found to be significantly correlated with voice in all eight social contexts.

The results of the study also showed that racial dynamics and the experience of racism might be influential in shaping voice in certain contexts. For example, in general, level of voice tended to be higher in Asian contexts. Furthermore, although there were no significant associations between the overall voice scores and the total racism-related stress scores, there were significant relationships between the two when social contexts were examined separately. The results of this study suggested that racism-related stress may be associated with lower levels of voice in certain contexts (i.e., non-Asian and male). While future research would be necessary to further elucidate these findings, the study does suggest that race issues may play a role in whether an Asian American woman is able to share her perspectives freely. Shih et al. (2013) found that individuals from marginalized groups may de-emphasize, switch or otherwise manage their social identities (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) depending on the social context in order to protect themselves from being unfairly disadvantaged. Unfortunately, hiding certain aspects of one's identity may eventually lead to a more generalized self-silencing (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003); thus, talented individuals may be prevented from fully engaging in the work and academic settings. For these reasons, it is important for organizations to create a work setting that is supportive of diversity.

Finally, the study found that cultural differences, such as self-construal, influenced the degree to which an individual may speak up or actively participate in verbal discussions. Being aware of cultural differences and not privileging certain communication styles over others would be important in helping to level the playing field in the work/academic setting. For example, in many Asian cultures openly disagreeing or expressing perspectives frankly may be seen as disruptive to social harmony.

Furthermore, it may be difficult for some individuals to speak up during a group discussion because they have been socialized to value listening over speaking. Thus, not penalizing employees or students who might not be as active in verbal discussions would be important in not only preventing certain groups from being placed at a relative disadvantage, but also helps to create a more inclusive work culture. Moreover, acknowledging and appreciating the skills and other contributions of employees and students is key to ensuring that they are evaluated fairly and in a way that does not put them at a disadvantage for having a different cultural background.

In sum, these results, in combination with the literature on voice, demonstrated the importance of creating a social climate that is open to diverse perspectives and values differences regardless of power/social status, gender or cultural and racial background. Furthermore, it is important for schools and workplaces to understand the silencing process and it's potentially damaging effects at both the individual and organizational levels in order to build a culture that is inclusive, welcomes diversity and values the contributions of Asian American women and other minority groups.

**Implications for clinical practice.** This study also has implications for clinical practice. Findings demonstrated that lower levels of voice were associated with higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of self-esteem, which is consistent with previous research on voice and wellbeing. Given the negative emotional consequences associated with loss of voice, understanding the silencing process is necessary in order to provide appropriate and effective counseling services that are sensitive to diversity issues.

Because perceived support for voice was found to be significantly correlated with voice within the same context, clinicians may explore with their clients how their past

experiences (e.g., experiences of sexism, racism, etc.) might have shaped their perceptions of support and, in turn, their ability to speak freely in specific settings. Additionally, the results of the study may provide some insights into how the clinician's social status (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, authority, etc.) could potentially influence how freely an Asian American woman may express herself in the therapeutic environment. As with the work/school setting, it would be important for the therapist to create a safe space that encourages and supports authentic expression of one's thoughts, feelings and perspectives. Acknowledging and validating the client's experiences of discrimination (e.g., gender, race, culture/beliefs, etc.) and subsequent discomfort in certain settings is also essential in both preventing further injury (Lowe et al., 2012) and in counteracting self-silencing (Gilligan, 1993; Harter, 1996). Furthermore, the clinician's understanding of the factors that may contribute to silencing for Asian American women (namely issues related to gender, culture, race, and power) will help facilitate discussion on these topics which may help the client develop a critical consciousness that may counteract silencing. For example, helping clients understand their experiences of silencing from a broader perspective may help them recognize that their "quietness" may be due to potential external reasons (e.g., "chilly climate," stereotyping, cultural factors, etc.) rather than a stable part of their identities or personality characteristic like shyness or introversion; thus, clients may be helped to overcome the situational conditions that contribute to oppressive silencing.

A fuller understanding of the silencing process for Asian American women can also help in the development of a good therapeutic alliance and may result in lower rates of premature dropout from therapy. For example, being aware of cultural issues in

communication and microaggressions could help prevent cultural misunderstanding and/or further silencing within the therapeutic relationship. Acknowledgement and validation of experiences of sexism and racism can also help to both provide a supportive environment where the client can be heard, as well as foster open discussion about these issues—all of which may potentially increase trust and contribute to a stronger working alliance.

**Study Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of the study was that it restricted the number of social contexts that were examined. While there are many potential variables that influence voice, this study, based on the literature, focused specifically on the social contexts where gender, race and power were more prominent. Because the study examined a select number of settings, the social contexts had some overlapping features. For example, "Non-Asian Authority" may include females as well as males. Additionally, it is unclear what participants had envisioned as "non-Asian" and if it might have influenced the level of voice. For example, if the non-Asian context included people of color would that influence the level of voice in the same way it would if "non-Asian" was interpreted as European American, specifically? As such, additional research should be done to separate out and examine these contexts in greater detail in order to clarify the practical implications of the findings. Nonetheless, this study provided a preliminary glimpse at some of the aspects of social climate that may play a role in voice behaviors, namely contexts that bring issues of race, gender and power to the fore.

Future research can build upon these findings by including qualitative methodology, especially given that the topic is on voice. Although this quantitative study

provided some insight into the silencing process for Asian American women, it was based on existing theories and research and may be limited by the researchers' perspectives on the issues. A qualitative study would enable participants to *give voice* by describing their experiences in their own words. Moreover, a qualitative study would help to elucidate the study's quantitative findings by helping to explain *why* voice varied across social settings. That is, a qualitative study would be able to explore in more detail the specific contexts that allow or inhibit voice and provide a fuller explanation of the silencing process for Asian American women. For example, a qualitative study might examine the meaning of voice and silence for Asian American women (e.g., In what contexts is silence seen as culturally appropriate vs. oppressive?). In sum, a qualitative approach would both provide a deeper understanding of the issue of voice for these women in their own words, as well as provide clues to new directions for future research.

Another area that remains unexplored in this study is the potential role of racial identity in determining level of voice. Racial identity models, such as the People of Color (POC) Racial Identity model, may be useful in helping to explain how individuals might respond to and/or internalize societal racism into their self-concepts (Helms & Cook, 1999). The racial identity statuses of the POC model, which represent the thought processes of people in response to racial information include: (a) Contact – characterized by dismissal and minimization of race and racial issues; (b) Dissonance – characterized by confusion and distress about race and racial issues; (c) Immersion/Emersion – characterized by extreme sensitivity to race and polarized thinking about racial issues; (d) Internalization – characterized by a positive acceptance of one's own racial group and the ability to respond objectively to members of the dominant group and (e) Integrative –

characterized by cognitive flexibility and complexity when thinking about racial issues (Helms & Cook, 1999). Because racial identity can shape one's reaction to racial information, it stands to reason that the relationship between racism-related stress and voice may be influenced by one's racial identity status. Thus, for example, a person who is in the contact status may not be aware of racial issues and so may not be inhibited by race salient social contexts. On the other hand, a person in the Immersion/Emersion status may be hypersensitive to racial dynamics and might be more likely to either inhibit their thoughts out of self-protection or, conversely, they might be very vocal (e.g., due to anger about the injustices of racism). Future research may explore the role of racial identity in level of voice as well as the potential influences of racial identity on the relationship between voice and racism-related stress.

Although the study results suggest that culturally informed communication style is associated with levels of voice, the study relied on a self-construal measure as a proxy for communication style. Although previous research has found that self-construal is tied to communication style (Gao, 1998; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Park & Kim, 2008; Singelis & Brown, 1995;) and is considered a good predictor of communication style (Gudykunst et al., 1996), the study could be improved by utilizing an instrument that measures communication style directly. Future development of a good measure for communication style and subsequent studies on voice using the measure would help to clarify and possibly confirm the results of this study.

Other limitations of the study are related to the sample of participants. First, the study utilized an online survey to collect the data. While the use of the Internet allowed the study to be accessed by a more diverse group of participants (e.g., geographic

location, age, and other demographics), caution should be used in terms of generalizing the results of the study since the group is self-selected and may not be representative of the experiences of other Asian American women. For example, it could be that those who have Internet and computer resources and the knowledge/skills to access the survey may be more privileged than other Asian American women (e.g., more economic resources, more education, etc.). These characteristics may affect perceptions of personal power as well as level of vulnerability to silencing pressures; thus, for example, a person with fewer resources may feel more threat in certain situations and therefore may be more likely to inhibit their opinions out of fear of negative consequences. Furthermore, a large percentage of participants were recruited into the study through websites that are specifically focused on Asian American issues (e.g., Angry Asian Man, More than Serving Tea, Asian Nation). These websites discuss topics that are relevant to Asian Americans and address racial and gender inequality for Asian Americans. Thus, this group of Asian American women may be actively working through issues of voice and may be particularly aware of the impact of gender, race, culture and power on the lived experiences of Asian Americans. For these reasons, they may not be representative of the larger Asian American population. Future research should include a more diverse pool of Asian American women.

**Conclusion**

The present study examined the issue of voice for Asian American women in different social contexts. While there have been numerous studies on the issue of voice for women, few have focused on Asian American women. This study adds to the existing research on voice by exploring the different social contexts that may or may not be

conducive to voice for this population. Specifically, the study examined variables that may influence voice such as gender, race and racism, power and culture. Additionally, the study looked at the relationship between voice and wellbeing and the role of support.

The study found that voice was significantly different across social contexts, which suggested that aspects of the social climate (e.g., race, gender, power) may be important factors in whether these women were more or less likely to express themselves authentically. Similarly, perceived support for voice also varied depending on social context: support for voice within a particular context was associated with increased voice in that context.

In general, the results suggested that voice was higher in settings where power was less salient (i.e., more egalitarian settings such as with peers) but lower in settings associated with certain assumed power differences (e.g., males, authority). Moreover, the pattern of results was consistent, in general, with the study hypotheses: voice was highest in the peer, female and Asian contexts while voice was lowest with the authority, male and non-Asian contexts. These findings suggest that social climate and support for voice are significant factors that may affect whether Asian American women feel comfortable to speak up.

The present study also found voice to be correlated with wellbeing: higher levels of voice were associated with lower levels of psychological distress and higher self-esteem. The results also confirmed hypotheses about the relationship between voice and self-construal, suggesting a link between culture and verbal expression.

Although the study provided some evidence that racism-related stress may negatively affect voice in certain contexts, some of the results were unclear due to the

limited number of the social settings that were included in the study. Future research would be necessary to clarify these results. Finally, the study highlights the importance of considering power differences in voice, particularly as it is embedded in the dynamics of gender, race and social status.

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Table 1
*Participant Characteristics (N=190)*

| Characteristic | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (*M*=28.11, *SD*=8.06) | | | |
| | Under 30 years old | 136 | 71.6 |
| | 31 – 45 years old | 48 | 25.3 |
| | Over 45 years old | 6 | 3.2 |
| Asian Group | | | |
| | East Asian | 137 | 72.1 |
| | South Asian | 3 | 1.6 |
| | Southeast Asian | 28 | 14.7 |
| | Multiple Asian groups/Multiracial/Other | 22 | 11.6 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| | Cambodian | 2 | 1.1 |
| | Chinese | 88 | 46.3 |
| | Filipina | 14 | 7.4 |
| | Hmong | 1 | .5 |
| | Indian | 2 | 1.1 |
| | Japanese | 4 | 2.1 |
| | Korean | 27 | 14.2 |
| | Laotian | 1 | .5 |
| | Thai | 2 | 1.1 |
| | Vietnamese | 8 | 4.2 |
| | Chinese/Taiwanese | 6 | 3.2 |
| | Taiwanese | 11 | 5.8 |
| | Multiple ethnicities | 23 | 12.1 |
| | Other | 1 | .5 |
| Generational Status | | | |
| | 1st Generation | 12 | 6.3 |
| | 1.5 Generation | 47 | 24.7 |
| | 2nd Generation | 113 | 59.5 |
| | 3rd Generation | 9 | 4.7 |
| | 4th Generation | 5 | 2.6 |
| | 5th Generation or more | 1 | .5 |
| | Other | 3 | 1.6 |
| Annual Income | | | |
| | Less than $30,000 | 50 | 26.3 |
| | $30,000 to $74,999 | 61 | 32.1 |
| | $75,000 or more | 48 | 25.3 |
| | “Rather not say” | 31 | 16.3 |
| Education | | | |
| | High School graduate | 7 | 3.7 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Vocational/Tech | 2 | 1.1 |
| | Some College | 37 | 19.5 |
| | College Graduate (4 yrs) | 84 | 44.2 |
| | Masters | 44 | 23.2 |
| | Doctorate | 6 | 3.2 |
| | Professional Degree | 8 | 4.2 |
| | Other | 2 | 1.1 |
| U.S. Region (*N*=189) | | | |
| | Northeast | 68 | 35.8 |
| | Midwest | 19 | 10.0 |
| | South | 24 | 12.6 |
| | West | 76 | 40.0 |
| | Not currently living in the U.S. | 2 | 1.1 |
| Referral source | | | |
| | Liserv | 2 | 1.1 |
| | E-mail | 16 | 8.4 |
| | Word of Mouth | 23 | 12.1 |
| | Social Networking site | 44 | 23.2 |
| | Angry Asian Man blog | 83 | 43.7 |
| | More Than Serving Tea blog | 5 | 2.6 |
| | National Association for Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) | 3 | 1.6 |
| | Other | 14 | 7.4 |

Table 2
*Regression: Voice and Self-Esteem*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.575 | 2.592 | | |
| Total Voice Score | 7.173 | .901 | .511 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = Rosenberg Self-esteem; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 3
*Regression: Voice and Somatization*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 71.282 | 4.548 | | |
| Total Voice Score | -6.890 | 1.580 | -.310 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = BSI-18 Somatization score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 4
*Regression: Voice and Depression*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 81.129 | 4.695 | | |
| Total Voice Score | -9.149 | 1.631 | -.387 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = BSI-18 Depression score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 5
*Regression: Voice and Anxiety*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 78.874 | 4.895 | | |
| Total Voice Score | -7.753 | 1.701 | -.323 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = BSI-18 Anxiety score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 6
*Regression: Voice and BSI-18 Global Symptom Index*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 81.558 | 4.954 | | |
| Total Voice Score | -9.162 | 1.721 | -.370 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = BSI-18 Global Symptom Index score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 7
*Regression: Voice and Interdependent Self-Construal*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 5.698 | .350 | | |
| Total Voice Score | -.290 | .122 | -.174 | .018 |

Note: Criterion variable = Interdependent Self-Construal score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 8
*Regression: Voice and Independent Self-Construal*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.356 | .339 | | |
| Total Voice Score | .806 | .118 | .453 | .000 |

Note: Criterion variable = Independent Self-Construal score; Predictor variable = Total voice score

Table 9
*Level of Voice by Social Context (N=184)*

| Social Context | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .63669 |
| Female Peer | 3.0500 | .67306 |
| Male Peer | 2.9228 | .65246 |
| Non-Asian Peer | 2.8353 | .69274 |
| Female Authority | 2.7728 | .64708 |
| Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .67740 |
| Asian Authority | 2.6448 | .67675 |
| Male Authority | 2.4674 | .69669 |

Table 10
*Pairwise Comparisons for Voice by Context*

| Social Context | | Means | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Peer (2.9228) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .003 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6448 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |
| Female Peer (3.0500) | Non-Asian Peer | 2.8353 | .003 |
| | Female Authority | 2.7728 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6448 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |
| Asian Peer (3.1285) | Male Peer | 2.9228 | .003 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 2.8353 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 2.7728 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6448 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |
| Non-Asian Peer (2.8353) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .000 |
| | Female Peer | 3.0500 | .003 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |
| Male Authority (2.4674) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .000 |
| | Female Peer | 3.0500 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9228 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 2.8353 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 2.7728 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.6620 | .000 |
| Female Authority (2.7728) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .000 |
| | Female Peer | 3.0500 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |
| Asian Authority (2.6448) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .000 |
| | Female Peer | 3.0500 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9228 | .000 |
| Non-Asian Authority (2.6620) | Asian Peer | 3.1285 | .000 |
| | Female Peer | 3.0500 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9228 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 2.8353 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.4674 | .000 |

Table 11
*Perceived Support for Voice by Context, Outliers Included (N=182)*

| Social Context | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| Female Peer | 3.2604 | .55192 |
| Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .51371 |
| Non-Asian Peer | 3.0190 | .55423 |
| Female Authority | 2.9923 | .59958 |
| Male Peer | 2.9069 | .62769 |
| Non-Asian Authority | 2.8681 | .64335 |
| Male Authority | 2.7681 | .66355 |
| Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .65759 |

Table 12
*Perceived Support for Voice by Context, Outliers Excluded (N=170)*

| Social Context | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| Female Peer | 3.3082 | .49188 |
| Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .47130 |
| Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .52895 |
| Female Authority | 3.0565 | .52453 |
| Male Peer | 2.9379 | .61653 |
| Non-Asian Authority | 2.9235 | .59029 |
| Male Authority | 2.8141 | .63005 |
| Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .59703 |

Table 13
*Pairwise Comparisons for Perceived Support for Voice by Context, Outliers Included*

| Social Context | | Means | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Peer | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| (2.9069) | Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.7681 | .004 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .001 |
| Female Peer | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0190 | .000 |
| (3.2604) | Female Authority | 2.9923 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9069 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.8681 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.7681 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .000 |
| Asian Peer | Female Authority | 2.9923 | .015 |
| (3.1624) | Male Peer | 2.9069 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.8681 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.7681 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .000 |
| Non-Asian Peer | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| (3.0190) | Non-Asian Authority | 2.8681 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.7681 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .000 |
| Male Authority | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| (2.7681) | Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0190 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 2.9923 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9069 | .004 |
| Female Authority | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| (2.9923) | Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .015 |
| | Male Authority | 2.7681 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .000 |
| Asian Authority | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| (2.6865) | Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0190 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 2.9923 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9069 | .001 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.8681 | .035 |
| Non-Asian | Female Peer | 3.2604 | .000 |
| Authority | Asian Peer | 3.1624 | .000 |
| (2.8681) | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0190 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.6865 | .035 |

Table 14
*Pairwise Comparisons for Perceived Support for Voice by Context, Outliers Excluded*

| Social Context | | Means | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Peer | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |
| (2.9379) | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .014 |
| | Male Authority | 2. 8141 | .014 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .017 |
| Female Peer | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .000 |
| (3.3082) | Female Authority | 3.0565 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9379 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.9235 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.8141 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .000 |
| Asian Peer | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .036 |
| (3.2044) | Female Authority | 3.0565 | .029 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9379 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.9235 | .000 |
| | Male Authority | 2.8141 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .000 |
| Non-Asian Peer | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |
| (3.0603) | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .036 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9379 | .014 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.9235 | .002 |
| | Male Authority | 2.8141 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .000 |
| Male Authority | | | |
| (2. 8141) | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |
| | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 3.0565 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9379 | .014 |
| | Non-Asian Authority | 2.9235 | .011 |
| Female Authority | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |
| (3.0565) | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .029 |
| | Male Authority | 2.8141 | .000 |
| | Asian Authority | 2.7585 | .000 |
| Asian Authority | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (2.7585) | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .000 |
| | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .000 |
| | Female Authority | 3.0565 | .000 |
| | Male Peer | 2.9379 | .017 |
| Non-Asian | Female Peer | 3.3082 | .000 |
| Authority | Asian Peer | 3.2044 | .000 |
| (2.9235) | Non-Asian Peer | 3.0603 | .002 |
| | Male Authority | 2.8141 | .011 |

Table 15
*Regression: Voice and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 3.038 | .130 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.063 | .040 | -.117 | .118 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 16
*Regression: Voice in Male Peer Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 3.115 | .185 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.058 | .057 | -.076 | .310 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Male Peer Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 17
*Regression: Voice in Female Peer Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 3.034 | .191 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | .006 | .059 | .008 | .914 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Female Peer Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 18
*Regression: Voice in Asian Peer Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 3.071 | .179 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | .024 | .055 | .032 | .668 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Asian Peer Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 19
*Regression: Voice in Non-Asian Peer Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 3.457 | .193 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.196 | .060 | -.239 | .001 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Non-Asian Peer Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 20
*Regression: Voice in Male Authority Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.865 | .201 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.127 | .062 | -.152 | .041 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Male Authority Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 21
*Regression: Voice in Female Authority Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.880 | .184 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.031 | .057 | -.152 | .582 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Female Authority Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 22
*Regression: Voice in Asian Authority Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.718 | .194 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.022 | .060 | -.152 | .709 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Asian Authority Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 23
*Regression: Voice in Non-Asian Authority Context and Racism-Related Stress*

| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.959 | .196 | | |
| Discrimination Distress Score | -.094 | .060 | -.117 | .119 |

Note: Criterion variable = Total Voice Score in Non-Asian Authority Context; Predictor variable = Total Racism-Related Stress

Table 24
*Correlations between voice and perceived support for voice by context, Outliers Included*

| Social Context | N | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Peer | 186 | .523** | .000 |
| Female Peer | 186 | .602** | .000 |
| Asian Peer | 185 | .431** | .000 |
| Non-Asian Peer | 185 | .535** | .000 |
| Male Authority | 184 | .572** | .000 |
| Female Authority | 185 | .635** | .000 |
| Asian Authority | 185 | .536** | .000 |
| Non-Asian Authority | 185 | .594** | .000 |
| Total Scores | 185 | .708** | .000 |

Table 25
*Correlations between voice and perceived support for voice by context, Outliers Excluded*

| Social Context | N | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male Peer | 186 | .523** | .000 |
| Female Peer | 183 | .559** | .000 |
| Asian Peer | 183 | .425** | .000 |
| Non-Asian Peer | 184 | .542** | .000 |
| Male Authority | 184 | .572** | .000 |
| Female Authority | 183 | .646** | .000 |
| Asian Authority | 181 | .521** | .000 |
| Non-Asian Authority | 182 | .556** | .000 |
| Total Scores | 183 | .699** | .000 |

**Appendix A**
**Mapping Plan Linking Research Questions to Proposed Hypotheses and Analytic Technique**

| | Research Questions/Hypotheses | Analyses |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| 1 | **Is there a relationship between voice and wellbeing?**<br><br>H1a: Higher levels of voice will be associated with lower levels of psychological distress (i.e., higher levels of voice associated with higher self-esteem, lower levels of psychological distress)<br><br>H1b: Lower levels of voice will be associated with lower levels of psychological health (i.e., lower levels of voice associated with lower self-esteem and higher levels of psychological distress) | Two separate simple regressions will be conducted with voice as the predictor variable and wellbeing measures (i.e., self-esteem score and 3 psychological distress subscores and total psychological distress scores) as the criterion variables. |
| | | |
| 2 | **What is the relationship between culture and voice?**<br><br>H2a: Higher independent self-construal will be associated with higher levels of voice.<br><br>H2b: Higher interdependent self-construal will be associated with lower levels of voice | Two separate regressions (one for interdependent self-construal and one for independent self-construal) will be conducted with the self-construal scores as the predictor variables and total voice score as the criterion variables |
| | | |
| 3 | **Does level of voice vary across different social contexts? (i.e., vary with power)?**<br><br>H3a: Voice will vary across social context<br><br>H3b: Higher levels of voice will occur in contexts involving peers, Asians, and females<br><br>H3c: Lower levels of voice will occur in contexts involving authority, non-Asians, and males | Repeated measures ANOVA, with social context as the within participant variable and voice as the criterion variable. Post hoc tests will be conducted to examine the relationship between voice and context |

| | |
|---|---|
| **4 Are there differences in perceived support for voice across different social contexts?**<br><br>H4a: Perceived support for voice will vary across social context.<br><br>H5b Perceived support for voice will be higher in the peer, Asian, and female contexts<br><br>H6c: Perceived support for voice will be lower in the authority, non-Asian, and male contexts | Repeated measures ANOVA, with social context as the within participant variable and perceived support for voice as the criterion variable. Post hoc tests will be conducted to examine the relationship between voice and context |
| | |
| **5 Are racism-related stress associated with voice behaviors?**<br><br>H5a: Higher levels of racism-related stress will be associated with lower levels of voice. Conversely, lower levels of racism-related stress will be associated with higher levels of voice<br><br>H5b: Higher levels of racism-related stress will be associated with lower levels of voice, particularly in the race-salient context (i.e., stronger relationship compared with other social contexts) | A multiple regression will be conducted using the total score of the AARRSI as the predictor and the total voice score as criterion variable<br><br>Separate regressions will also be conducted using the total AARRSI score as predictor variable and voice score in each context as the criterion variables |
| | |
| **6 Is there a relationship between level of voice and perceived support for voice?**<br><br>H6a: Within each social context, perceived support for voice will be positively correlated with level of voice | Correlations between perceived support for voice and level of voice will be conducted within each social context. |

## Appendix B
## Online Participant Recruitment Letter

**Subject: Call for Asian American women (ages 18 or older) to participate in a survey and a chance to win a an Amazon.com gift certificate**

My name is Pauline Chan, a graduate student in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program. I am a second generation Chinese American and am working on my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Belle Liang. The study focuses on the social experiences of Asian American women. The study has been approved by the Boston College Office for Research Protections Institutional Review Board (Protocol #12.172.01A).

I am writing to ask Asian American women to participate in my online dissertation research survey and to offer an opportunity to be entered in a random drawing for an Amazon.com gift certificate for participation in the survey (5 $20 gift certificates and 2 $50 gift certificates available).

To participate in the study, participants must:

- ❑ Be 18 years or older *and*
- ❑ Self-identify as a woman who is Asian American or a member of an Asian American subgroup

In this survey participants will be asked questions about social experiences in different contexts, social attitudes, culture and wellbeing. The survey will take approximately 35-45 minutes to complete and may be found at the following link:

https://bclynch.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5ovPhtb1hD7Ra0A

In exchange for their time, participants will be given an opportunity to enter a random drawing for an Amazon.com gift certificate when they have completed the survey. Participants who complete the survey will also be offered access to the results of the study once it is completed.

The survey responses are completely anonymous. Any name or email information given will not be linked in any way to the responses and will only be used for the purposes of distributing the gift certificates. Any individual demographic information will also remain confidential and will not be linked to any names or email addresses. Participation is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

As there are limited studies about the Asian American experience, all participant responses will be helpful in contributing to our knowledge about Asian Americans. It is my hope that the results of the study will provide insights that will help to improve the life experiences of Asian American women.

If you have any questions, please contact me at chanpa@bc.edu or [redacted]. You can also reach my dissertation advisor, Belle Liang, at liangbe@bc.edu or 617-552-4079.

Thank you in advance for your help and your time.

## Appendix C
## Consent Form to Participate in the Asian American Women's Voice Study

### Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Pauline Chan, who is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at Boston College. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between Asian American women's social experiences and wellbeing. The study will help us to better understand the concerns of Asian American women and the knowledge gained from this project may help to improve the life experiences for these women. This project is for Ms. Chan's dissertation, which is being overseen by Dr. Belle Liang. This study has been approved by the Boston College Office for Research Protections Institutional Review Board (Protocol #12.172.01) and was partially funded by the Boston College Dissertation Development Grant. The Boston College IRB has approved this protocol from December 12, 2011 - December 12, 2012. This form will give you information about the study and will answer questions that you may have about being in the study.

You may choose to take part in the study if you are:

- 18 years or older *and*
- A woman who is Asian American or a member of an Asian American subgroup

If you agree to take part in this study:

- You will be asked to provide descriptive information about yourself (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, education, etc.).
- You will be asked to answer some questions about social experiences, attitudes about race, and wellbeing.
- All of your answers will remain confidential and will not be connected to any personally identifiable information.
- The study will take about 35-45 minutes to complete. *If you are unable to complete the study all at one time, you may return to the site at another time to complete the survey. To return to the survey you must go through the survey link using the same web browser on the same computer.* ***Your partially completed survey will be available for one week. Please complete it within one week. Thank you.***
- You will be given an opportunity to enter a drawing for one of seven Amazon.com gift certificates (5 $20 and 2 $50 gift certificates are available). Gift certificates will be emailed to the address that you provide.
- Participants will also be offered access to the results of the study once it is completed.

All responses will be stored on a secure online server until the study is completed. The information will only be available to Ms. Chan and her dissertation advisor, and may also

be presented at professional meetings or in published articles. Your name will never be used and no one will know your identity. Any personal information that you give (e.g., name, email address) will remain separate from your responses and will only be used for the purposes of awarding the gift certificates. Although every effort will be made to keep your information private, this project may, on occasion, be reviewed by agencies like the Boston College Institutional Review Board in order to make sure that all steps have been taken to protect your privacy.

It is possible that you may feel slight emotional discomfort when thinking about race-related issues and social experiences. If you do experience emotional discomfort after completing the study and would like to talk with someone, a contact will be provided for you to follow up with. Although the researcher does not expect any additional risks in volunteering in the study, unforeseen risks are possible. If at anytime you wish to discontinue the survey, you may do so without penalty. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions or would like more information on this study, please contact Pauline Chan at chanpa@bc.edu or [redacted]. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Boston College Office for Research Protection at 617-552-4778.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your own records. By selecting the "Yes" option below, you are confirming that you have read these statements, understand them, and agree to participate in the study.

Thank you in advance for your help and your time. Your time and willingness to share your experiences are greatly appreciated and will contribute greatly to this study.

*I have read these statements, understand them, and agree to participate in the study.*

- o Yes
- o No

**Appendic D**
**Demographic Questionnaire**

1. What is your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male

2. What is your age? _____

3. Which of the following Asian American groups do you identify with?
    a. East Asian American
    b. Middle east Asian American
    c. Pacific Islander American
    d. South Asian American
    e. Southeast Asian American
    f. Other (please specify)_____

4. Please specify the ethnic group to which belong (e.g., Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, etc.) _____

5. What is your generational status?
    a. 1st generation (immigrated to the U.S.)
        Please specify age_____
    b. 1.5 generation (immigrated to the U.S. as a child).
        Please specify age_____
    c. 2nd generation (born in the U.S.)
    d. 3rd generation (one or both parent(s) were born in the U.S.
    e. 4th generation
    f. 5th generation
    g. Other (please specify)_____

6. What is your sexual orientation?
    a. Bisexual
    b. Gay
    c. Heterosexual
    d. Questioning
    e. Other (please specify)

7. What is your relationship status?
    a. Single
    b. Partnered
    c. Married
    d. Separated
    e. Divorced
    f. Widowed

   g. Other (please specify)_____
8. What is the highest educational level you completed?
   a. High School
   b. Some College
   c. Associates Degree
   d. Undergraduate Degree
   e. Graduate Degree
   f. Other (please specify)_____

9. What is your annual combined income?
   a. $0-$9,999
   b. 10,000-19,999
   c. 20,000-29,999
   d. 30,000-39,999
   e. 40,000-49,999
   f. 50,000-59,999
   g. 60,000-69,999
   h. 70,000-79,999
   i. 80,000-89,999
   j. 90,000-99,999
   k. 100,000-119,999
   l. 120,000-139,000
   m. 140,000-159,999
   n. 160,000-179,999
   o. 180,000-199,999
   p. 200,000 +

10. In what state do you live?_____

11. How did you hear about this study?
   a. Listserv
   b. E-mail
   c. Word of mouth (e.g., friend, colleagues, etc.)
   d. Other (please specify)_____

## Appendix E
## Voice in Context

*The following are statements about how you express yourself around some people in your life. To complete this questionnaire, please follow the steps below:*

1. *Read BOTH parts of the statement.*
2. *Decide which one of the two pairs of the statement best describes you.*
3. *Go to the side of the statement that best describes the way you are most of the time. Check whether that part of the statement is "SORT OF TRUE" for you or "REALLY TRUE."*
4. *Make sure that you check only <u>one</u> of the four blanks for each item on the questionnaire.*

### Saying What I Think Around my Male Peers

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with their male peers | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with their male peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around their male peers | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around their male peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to their male peers | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to their male peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let their male peers know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think their male peers want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a | BUT | Other women can | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | hard time expressing their point of view to their male peers | | express their point of view to their male peers | | |

**Saying What I Think Around my Female Peers**

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with their female peers | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with their female peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around their female peers | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around their female peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to their female peers | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to their female peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let their female peers know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think their female peers want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to their female peers | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to their female peers | ☐ | ☐ |

**Saying What I Think Around my Asian Peers**

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with their Asian peers | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with their Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around their Asian peers | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around their Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to their Asian peers | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to their Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let their Asian peers know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think their Asian peers want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to their Asian peers | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to their Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |

**Saying What I Think Around my Non-Asian Peers**

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with their Non-Asian peers | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with their Non-Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around their Non-Asian peers | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around their Non-Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to their Non-Asian peers | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to their Non-Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let their Non-Asian peers know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think their Non-Asian peers want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to their Non-Asian peers | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to their Non-Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |

**Saying What I Think Around Male Authority Figures**

*(People in powerful or influential positions in your life. e.g., bosses/supervisors, professors/teachers, mentors, etc.)*

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with male authority figures | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with male authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around male authority figures | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around male authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to male authority figures | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to male authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let male authority figures know what's | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | important to them | | male authority figures want to hear | | |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to male authority figures | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to male authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |

**Saying What I Think Around Female Authority Figures**

*(People in powerful or influential positions in your life. e.g., bosses/supervisors, professors/teachers, mentors, etc.)*

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with female authority figures | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with female authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around female authority figures | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around female authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to female authority figures | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to female authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let female authority figures know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think female authority figures want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to female authority | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to female authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |

figures

**Saying What I Think Around Asian Authority Figures**

*(People in powerful or influential positions in your life. e.g., bosses/supervisors, professors/teachers, mentors, etc.)*

| Really True For Me | Sort of True For Me | | | | Sort of True For Me | Really True For Me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let Asian authority figures know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think Asian authority figures want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |

**Saying What I Think Around Non-Asian Authority Figures**

*(People in powerful or influential positions in your life. e.g., bosses/supervisors, professors/teachers, mentors, etc.)*

| Really | Sort of | | | | Sort of | Really |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| True For Me | True For Me | | | | True For Me | True For Me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women share what they are really thinking with Non-Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women find it hard to share what they are thinking with Non-Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women usually don't say what's on their mind around Non-Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women do say what's on their mind around Non-Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to express their opinions to Non-Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women have trouble expressing their opinions to Non-Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women are able to let Non-Asian authority figures know what's important to them | BUT | Other women are more likely to say what they think Non-Asian authority figures want to hear | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Some women have a hard time expressing their point of view to Non-Asian authority figures | BUT | Other women can express their point of view to Non-Asian authority figures | ☐ | ☐ |

**Appendix F**
**Perceived Support for Voice in Context**

People In My Life

*The following are statements about how you express yourself around some people in your life. To complete this questionnaire, please follow the steps below:*

5. *Read BOTH parts of the statement.*
6. *Decide which one of the two pairs of the statement best describes you.*
7. *Go to the side of the statement that best describes the way you are most of the time. Check whether that part of the statement is "SORT OF TRUE" for you or "REALLY TRUE."*
8. *Make sure that you check only one of the four blanks for each item on the questionnaire.*

| **Really True For Me** | **Sort of True For Me** | | | | **Sort of True For Me** | **Really True For Me** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | My female peers do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | My female peers do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Non-Asian authority figures do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | Non-Asian authority figures do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My Asian peers are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | My Asian peers are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Male authority figures respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | Male authority figures do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My female peers are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | My female peers are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | My non-Asian peers respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | My non-Asian peers do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Female authority figures show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | Female authority figures usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My Asian peers try to understand my point of view | OR | My Asian peers don't try to that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My female peers respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | My female peers do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My non-Asian peers show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | My non-Asian peers usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My male peers are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | My male peers are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My Asian peers respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | My Asian peers do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Non-Asian authority figures show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | Non-Asian authority figures usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My female peers show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | My female peers usually don't show that they want to | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | hear what I have to say | | |
| ☐ | ☐ | My male peers try to understand my point of view | OR | My male peers don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Male authority figures show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | Male authority figures usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My male peers respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | My male peers do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My Asian peers do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | My Asian peers do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My female peers try to understand my point of view | OR | My female peers don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Male authority figures are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | Male authority figures are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My male peers show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | My male peers usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Female authority figures are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | Female authority figures are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My Asian peers show | OR | My Asian peers | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | that they want to hear what I have to say | | usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | | |
| ☐ | ☐ | Asian authority figures are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | Asian authority figures are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My male peers do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | My male peers do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Non-Asian authority figures are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | Non-Asian authority figures are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Male authority figures do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | Male authority figures do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Asian authority figures try to understand my point of view | OR | Asian authority figures don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Female authority figures respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | Female authority figures do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My non-Asian peers are usually not interested in what's on my mind | OR | My non-Asian peers are usually interested in what's on my mind | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Asian authority figures do not listen to my opinions and take them | OR | Asian authority figures do listen to my opinions and | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | seriously | | take them seriously | | |
| ☐ | ☐ | Female authority figures do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | Female authority figures do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Asian authority figures respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | Asian authority figures do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My non-Asian peers try to understand my point of view | OR | My non-Asian peers don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Non-Asian authority figures respect my ideas even if they don't agree | OR | Non-Asian authority figures do not respect my ideas, especially when they disagree | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Asian authority figures show that they want to hear what I have to say | OR | Asian authority figures usually don't show that they want to hear what I have to say | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Female authority figures try to understand my point of view | OR | Female authority figures don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | My non-Asian peers do not listen to my opinions and take them seriously | OR | My non-Asian peers do listen to my opinions and take them seriously | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ | Male authority figures try to understand my point of view | OR | Male authority figures don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Non-Asian authority figures try to understand my point of view | OR | Non-Asian authority figures don't try that hard to understand my point of view | ☐ | ☐ |

## Appendix G
## Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994)

Please read the statements below and rate the degree to which you agree with each statement by using the following scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |

1. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
2. I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
3. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
4. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
5. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
6. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
7. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
8. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
9. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
10. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.
11. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
12. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
13. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
14. Speaking up during class is not a problem for me.
15. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor or my boss.

16. I act the same way no matter who I am with.

17. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.

18. I value being in good health above everything.

19. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group.

20. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.

21. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.

22. My personal identity independent of others is very important to me.

23. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.

24. I am the same person at home that I am at school/work.

## Appendix H
## Asian American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (AARRSI, Liang et al., 2004)

Instructions: Please read each item and CIRCLE the number next to the answer that best represents your reaction.

1) You hear about a racially motivated murder of an Asian American man.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

2) You hear that Asian Americans are not significantly represented in management positions.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

3) You are told that Asians have assertiveness problems.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

4) You notice that Asian characters in American TV shows either speak bad or heavily accented English.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

5) You notice that in American movies, male Asian leading characters never engage in physical contact (kissing, etc.) with leading female characters even when the plot would seem to call for it.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

6) Someone tells you that the kitchens of Asian families smell and are dirty.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

7) You notice that U.S. history books offer no information of the contributions of Asian Americans.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

8) You see a TV commercial in which an Asian character speaks bad English and acts subservient to non-Asian characters.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

9) You hear about an Asian American government scientist held in solitary confinement for mishandling government documents when his non-Asian co-workers were not punished for the same offense.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

10) You learn that Asian Americans historically were targets of racist actions.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

11) You learn that most non-Asian Americans are ignorant of the oppression and racial prejudice Asian Americans have endured in the U.S.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.

5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

12) At a restaurant you notice that a White couple who came in after you is served before you.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

13) You learn that, while immigration quotas on Asian peoples were severely restricted until the later half of the 1900s, quotas for European immigrants were not.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

14) Someone tells you that it's the Blacks that are the problem, not Asians.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

15) A student you do not know asks you for help in math.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

16) Someone tells you that they heard that there is a gene that makes Asians smart.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

17) Someone asks you if you know his or her Asian friend/coworker/classmate
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

18) Someone assumes that they serve dog meat in Asian restaurants.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

19) Someone tells you that your Asian American female friend looks just like Connie Chung.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

20) Someone you do not know speaks slow and loud at you.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

21) Someone asks you if all your friends are Asian Americans.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

22) Someone asks you if you can teach him/her karate
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

23) Someone tells you that “you people are all the same.”
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.
   3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
   4 This event happened and I was upset.
   5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

24) Someone tells you that all Asian people look alike.
   1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
   2 This event happened but did not bother me.

3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

25) Someone tells you Asian Americans are not targets of racism.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

26) Someone you do not know asks you to help him/her fix his/her computer.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

27) You are told that "you speak English so well."
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

28) Someone asks you what your real name is.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

29) You are asked where you are really from.
1 This has never happened to me or someone I know.
2 This event happened but did not bother me.
3 This event happened and I was slightly bothered.
4 This event happened and I was upset.
5 This event happened and I was extremely upset.

## Appendix I
## Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Please rate the following statements using the rating scale below. Please choose the number that best describes your experiences.

| Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.